



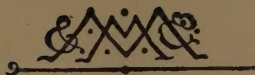
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THE SILVER TASSIE



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Sean O'Casey





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# THE SILVER TASSIE

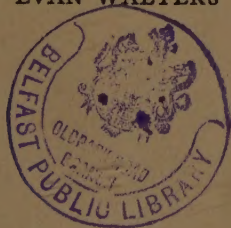
A TRAGI-COMEDY  
IN FOUR ACTS

BY

SEAN O'CASEY



WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR BY  
EVAN WALTERS



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1928

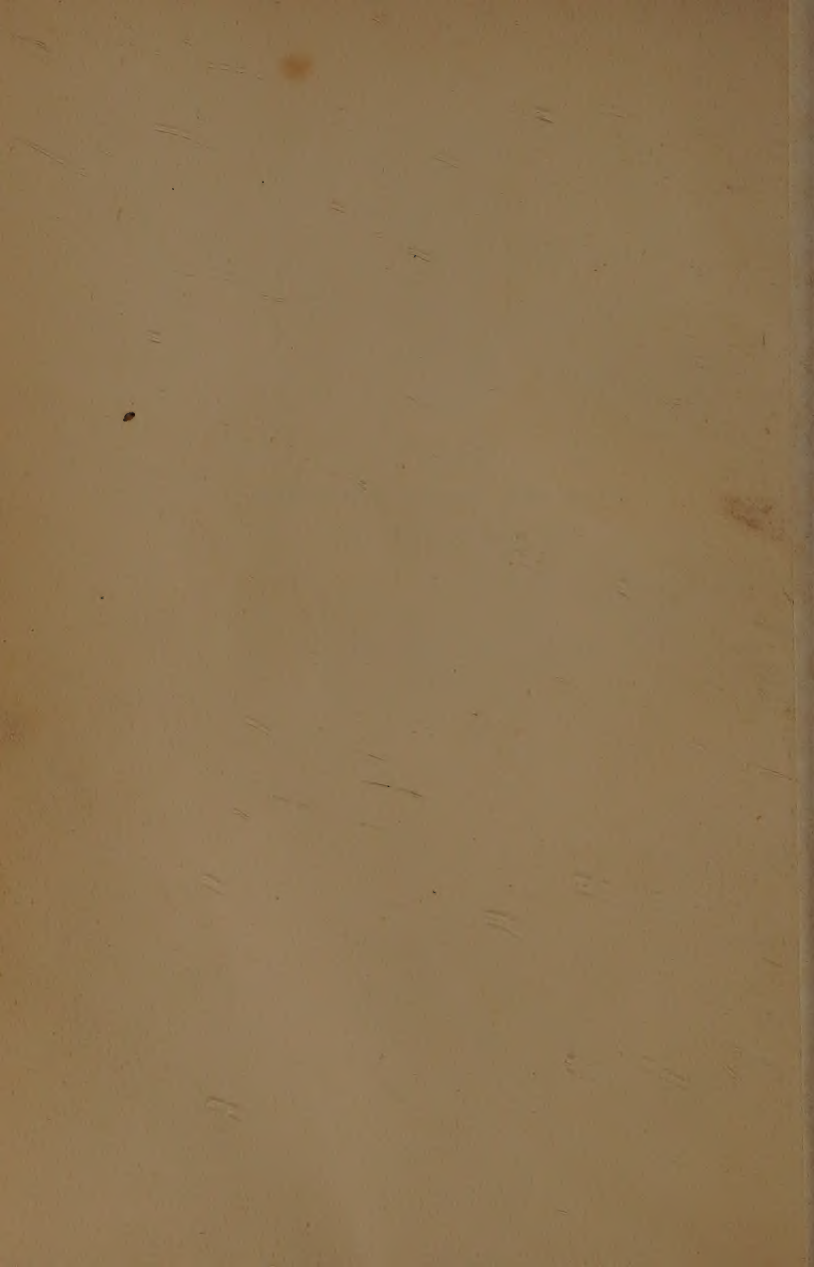
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TO  
EILEEN  
WITH THE YELLOW DAFFODILS  
IN THE GREEN VASE



THE author thanks Messrs. Francis, Day & Hunter for their very kind permission to use the air of the Tango, "Spain," in the fourth act of the play.

## CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY AS THEY APPEAR

SYLVESTER HEEGAN.

MRS. HEEGAN (*his wife*).

SIMON NORTON.

SUSIE MONICAN.

MRS. FORAN.

TEDDY FORAN (*her husband*).

HARRY HEEGAN, D.C.M. (*Heegan's son*).

JESSIE TAITE.

BARNEY BAGNAL.

THE CROUCHER.

1ST SOLDIER.

2ND SOLDIER.

3RD SOLDIER.

4TH SOLDIER.

THE CORPORAL.

THE VISITOR.

THE STAFF WALLAH.

1ST STRETCHER-BEARER.

2ND STRETCHER-BEARER.

1ST CASUALTY.

2ND CASUALTY.

SURGEON FORBY MAXWELL.

THE SISTER OF THE WARD.

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ACT I.—Room in Heegan's home.

ACT II.—Somewhere in France (*later on*).

ACT III.—Ward in a Hospital (*a little later on*).

ACT IV.—Room in Premises of Avondale Football Club  
(*later on still*).



## ACT I

SCENE: *The eating, sitting and part sleeping room of the Heegan family.*

*A large window at back looks on to a quay, from which can be seen the centre mast of a steamer at the top of which gleams a white light. Another window at right looks down on a side street. Under the window at back, plumb in the centre, is a stand, the legs gilded silver and the top gilded gold; on the stand is a purple velvet shield on which are pinned a number of silver medals surrounding a few gold ones. On each side of the shield is a small vase holding a bunch of artificial flowers. The shield is draped with red and yellow ribbons. To the left of the stand is a bed covered with a bedspread of black striped with vivid green. To the right of the stand is a dresser and chest of drawers combined. The fireplace is to the left. Beside the fireplace is a door leading to a*

E

I

B

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*bedroom, another door which gives access to the rest of the house and the street, on the right. At the corner left is a red coloured stand resembling an easel, having on it a silver-gilt framed picture photograph of HARRY HEEGAN in football dress, crimson jersey with yellow collar and cuffs and a broad yellow belt, black stockings and yellow football boots. A table on which are a half-pint bottle of whisky, a large parcel of bread and meat sandwiches and some copies of English illustrated magazines.*

SYLVESTER HEEGAN and SIMON NORTON are sitting by the fire. SYLVESTER HEEGAN is a stockily built man of sixty-five; he has been a docker all his life since first the muscles of his arms could safely grip a truck, and even at sixty-five the steel in them is only beginning to stiffen.

SIMON NORTON is a tall man, originally a docker too, but by a little additional steadiness, a minor effort towards self-education, a natural, but very slight superior nimbleness of mind, has risen in the Company's estimation and has been given the position of checker, a job entailing as many hours of work as a docker, almost as much danger, twice as much responsibility, and a corresponding reduction in



## THE SILVER TASSIE

*his earning powers. He is not so warmly, but a little more circumspectly, dressed than SYLVESTER, and in his manner of conduct and speech there is a hesitant suggestion of greater refinement than in those of SYLVESTER, and a still more vague indication that he is aware of it. This timid semi-conscious sense of superiority, which SIMON sometimes forgets, is shown frequently by a complacent stroking of a dark beard which years are beginning to humiliate. The night is cold, and SIMON and SYLVESTER occasionally stretch longingly towards the fire. They are fully dressed and each has his topcoat and hat beside him, as if ready to go out at a moment's notice. SUSIE MONICAN is standing at the table polishing a Lee-Enfield rifle with a chamois cloth; the butt of the rifle is resting on the table. She is a girl of twenty-two, well-shaped limbs, challenging breasts, all of which are defiantly hidden by a rather long dark blue skirt and bodice buttoning up to the throat, relieved by a crimson scarf around her neck, knotted in front and falling down her bosom like a man's tie. She is undeniably pretty, but her charms are almost completely hidden by her sombre, ill-fitting dress, and the rigid manner in which she has made her hair up declares*

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*her unflinching and uncompromising modesty. Just now she is standing motionless, listening intently, looking towards the door on right.*

MRS. HEEGAN is standing at the window at right, listening too, one hand pulling back the curtain, but her attention, taken from the window, is attracted to the door. She is older than SYLVESTER, stiffened with age and rheumatism; the end of her life is unknowingly lumbering towards a rest: the impetus necessity has given to continual toil and striving is beginning to slow down, and everything she has to do is done with a quiet mechanical persistence. Her inner ear cannot hear even a faint echo of a younger day. Neither SYLVESTER nor SIMON has noticed the attentive attitude of MRS. HEEGAN or SUSIE, for SYLVESTER, with one arm outstretched crooked at the elbow, is talking with subdued intensity to SIMON.

SYLVESTER. I seen him do it, mind you. I seen him do it.

SIMON. I quite believe you, Sylvester.

SYLVESTER. Break a chain across his bisseps! (*With pantomime action*) Fixes it over his arm . . . bends it up . . . a little strain . . . snaps in two . . . right across his bisseps!

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SUSIE. Shush you, there!

(MRS. HEEGAN goes out with troubled steps by door. The rest remain still for a few moments.)

SYLVESTER. A false alarm.

SIMON. No cause for undue anxiety; there's plenty of time yet.

SUSIE (*chanting as she resumes the polishing of gun*):

Lord, let me know mine end and the number of my days;

That I may be certified how long I have to live.

For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain:

He heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.

Thou hast showed thy people heavy things:

Thou hast given us a drink of deadly wine.

(*She sends the chant in the direction of*

SYLVESTER and SIMON.)

The wicked shall go down to hell:

And all the people that forget God.

(*She listens a moment and, leaving down the rifle, goes out by door left.*)

SYLVESTER. It's persecutin', that tambourine theology of Susie's. I always get a curious, sickenin' feelin', Simon, when I hear the Name

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of the Supreme Bein' tossed into the quietness of a sensible conversation.

SIMON. The day he won the Cross Country Championship of County Dublin, Syl, was a day to be chronicled.

SYLVESTER. In a minor way, yes, Simon. But the day that caps the chronicle was the one when he punched the fear of God into the heart of Police Constable 63 C under the stars of a frosty night on the way home from Terenure.

SIMON. Without any exaggeration, without any exaggeration, mind you, Sylvester, that could be called a memorable experience.

SYLVESTER. I can see him yet (*he gets up, slides from side to side, dodging and parrying imaginary blows*) glidin' round the dazzled bobby, cross-ey'd tryin' to watch him.

SIMON (*tapping his pipe resolutely on the hob*). Unperturbed, mind you, all the time.

SYLVESTER. An' the hedges by the road-side standin' stiff in the silent cold of the air, the frost beads on the branches glistenin' like toss'd-down diamonds from the breasts of the stars, the quietness of the night stimulated to a fuller stillness by the mockin' breathin' of Harry, an' the heavy, ragin' pantin' of the Bobby, an' the quickenin' beats of our own

hearts afraid of hopin' too little or hopin' too much.

*(During the last speech by SYLVESTER, SUSIE has come in with a bayonet, and has commenced to polish it.)*

SUSIE. We don't go down on our knees often enough; that's why we're not able to stand up to the Evil One: we don't go down on our knees enough. . . . I can hear some persons fallin' with a splash of sparks into the lake of everlastin' fire. . . . An account of every idle word shall be given at the last day.

*(She goes out again with rifle.)*

SUSIE *(bending towards SIMON and SYLVESTER as she goes)*. God is listenin' to yous; God is listenin' to yous!

SYLVESTER. Dtch, dtch, dtch. People ought to be forcibly restrained from constantly cannonadin' you with the name of the Deity.

SIMON. Dubiety never brush'd a thought into my mind, Syl, while I was waitin' for the moment when Harry would stretch the Bobby hors dee combaa on the ground.

SYLVESTER *(resuming his pantomime actions)*. There he was staggerin', beatin' out blindly, every spark of energy panted out of him, while Harry fainted, dodg'd, side-stepp'd, then suddenly sail'd in an' put him asleep with . . .

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ACT

SIMON. A right-handed hook to the jaw!  
 SYLVESTER. A left-handed hook to the jaw!

(together).

SYLVESTER (*after a pause*). A left-handed hook to the jaw, Simon.

SIMON. No, no, Syl, a right-handed hook to the jaw.

(MRS. FORAN runs quickly in by the door with a frying-pan in her hand, on which is a steak. She comes to the fire, pushing, so as to disturb the two men. She is one of the many gay, careworn women of the working-class.)

MRS. FORAN (*rapidly*). A pot of clothes is boilin' on the fire above, an' I knew you wouldn't mind me slappin' a bit of a steak on here for a second to show him when he comes in before he goes away that we're mindful of his needs, an' I'm hopeful of a dream to-night that the sea's between us, not lookin' very haggard in the mornin' to find the dream a true one. (*With satisfied anticipation*)

For I'll be single again, yes, I'll be single again; An' I eats what I likes, . . . an' I drinks what I likes,

An' I likes what I likes, when I'm——

(*Stopping suddenly*) What's the silence for?



## THE SILVER TASSIE

SYLVESTER (*slowly and decidedly*). I was at the fight, Simon, an' I seen him givin' a left-handed hook to the jaw.

MRS. FORAN. What fight?

SIMON (*slowly and decidedly*). I was there too, an' I saw him down the Bobby with a right-handed hook to the jaw.

MRS. FORAN. What Bobby? (*A pause.*)

SYLVESTER. It was a close up, an' I don't know who'd know better if it wasn't the boy's own father.

MRS. FORAN. What boy . . . what father?

SYLVESTER. Oh, shut up, woman, an' don't be smotherin' us with a shower of questions.

SUSIE (*who has entered on the last speech, and has started to polish a soldier's steel helmet*). Oh, the miserableness of them that don't know the things that belong unto their peace. They try one thing after another, they try everything, but they never think of trying God. (*Coming nearer to them*) Oh, the happiness of knowing that God's hand has pick'd you out for heaven. (*To MRS. FORAN*) What's the honey-pot kiss of a lover to the kiss of righteousness and peace?

(*MRS. FORAN, embarrassed, goes over to window.*)

SUSIE (*turning to SIMON*). Simon, will you not

close the dandy door of the public-house and let the angels open the pearly gates of heaven for you?

SUSIE (*concentrating on SYLVESTER*). Oh, Sylvester, Sylvester, will you, too, stuff your ears to the call of salvation? Don't make your life a feast-day of sin. Give over sighing after picture theatres that open the way to the bottomless pit, and crawl on your knees to heaven through the gates of pearl to the Palace of Beauty, where the walls are of jasper, and the city of Sion glitters with the green of the emerald; the red and grey-clouded sardonyx; where the sav'd glide over floors of polish'd chalcedony; rest against walls of sapphires blue, and yellow topaz; and look up to domey roofs of sparkling purple amethyst, chrysolite and beryl.

SYLVESTER. I feel very comfortable where I am, Susie.

SUSIE. Don't mock, Sylvester, don't mock. You'd run before a great wind, tremble in an earthquake, and flee from a fire; so don't treat lightly the still, small voice calling you to repentance and faith.

SYLVESTER (*with appeal and irritation*). Oh, do give over worryin' a man, Susie.

SUSIE. God shows His love by worrying, and

worrying, and worrying the sinner. The day will come when you will call on the mountains to cover you, and then you'll weep and gnash your teeth that you did not hearken to Susie's warning. (*Putting her hands appealingly on his shoulders*) Sylvester, if you pray long enough, and hard enough, and deep enough, you'll get the power to fight and conquer Beelzebub.

MRS. FORAN. I'll be in a doxological mood to-night, not because the kingdom of heaven'll be near me, but because my husband'll be far away, and to-morrow (*singing*)

I'll be single again, yes, single again;  
An' I goes where I likes, an' I does what I likes,  
An' I likes what I likes now I'm single again!

SIMON. Go on getting Harry's things ready, Susie, and defer the dosing of your friends with canticles till the time is ripe with rest for them to listen quietly.

(SIMON and SYLVESTER are very self-conscious during SUSIE'S talk to them. SIMON empties his pipe by tipping the head on the hob of the grate. He then blows through it. As he is blowing through it, SYLVESTER is emptying his by tapping it on the hob; as he is blowing it SIMON taps his again; as SIMON taps SYLVESTER taps with him and then they

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*look into the heads of the pipes and blow together.)*

SUSIE. It must be mercy or it must be judgement: if not mercy to-day it may be judgement to-morrow. He is never tired of waiting and waiting and waiting; and watching and watching and watching; and knocking and knocking and knocking for the sinner—you, Sylvester, and you, Simon—to turn from his wickedness and live. Oh, if the two of you only knew what it was to live! Not to live leg-staggering an' belly-creeping among the pain-spotted and sin-splashed desires of the flesh; but to live, oh, to live swift-flying from a holy peace to a holy strength, and from holy strength to a holy joy, like the flashing flights of a swallow in the deep beauty of a summer sky.

*(SIMON and SYLVESTER shift about self-conscious and uneasy.)*

SUSIE *(placing her hand first on SIMON's shoulder and then on SYLVESTER's)*. The two of you God's elegant swallows; a saved pair; a loving pair strong-wing'd, freed from the gin of the snarer, tip of wing to tip of wing, flying fast or darting swift together to the kingdom of heaven.

SIMON *(expressing a protecting thought to SYLVESTER)*. One of the two of us should go out and hunt back the old woman from the

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perishing cold of watching for the return of Harry.

SYLVESTER. She'll be as cold as a naked corpse, an' unstinted watchin' won't bring Harry back a minute sooner. I'll go an' drive her back. (*He rises to go*) I'll be back in a minute, Susie.

SIMON (*hurriedly*). Don't bother, Syl, I'll go; she won't be farther than the corner of the street; you go on toasting yourself where you are. (*He rises*) I'll be back in a minute, Susie.

MRS. FORAN (*running to the door*). Rest easy the two of you, an' I'll go, so as to give Susie full time to take the sin out of your bones an' put you both in first-class form for the kingdom of heaven.

(*She goes out.*)

SUSIE. Sinners that jeer often add to the glory of God: going out, she gives you, Sylvester, and you, Simon, another few moments, precious moments—oh, how precious, for once gone, they are gone for ever—to listen to the warning from heaven.

SIMON (*suddenly*). Whisht, here's somebody coming, I think?

SYLVESTER. I'll back this is Harry comin' at last.

(*A pause as the three listen.*)

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SYLVESTER. No, it's nobody.

SIMON. Whoever it was 's gone by.

SUSIE. Oh, Syl, oh, Simon, don't try to veil the face of God with an evasion. You can't, you can't cod God. This may be your last chance before the pains of hell encompass the two of you. Hope is passing by; salvation is passing by and glory arm-in-arm with her. In the quietness left to you go down on your knees and pray that they come into your hearts and abide with you for ever. . . . (*With fervour, placing her left hand on SIMON's shoulder and her right hand on SYLVESTER's, and shaking them*) Get down on your knees, get down on your knees, get down on your knees and pray for conviction of sin, lest your portion in David become as the portion of the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Perizzites and the Jebusites!

SYLVESTER. Eh, eh, Susie; cautious now—you seem to be forgettin' yourself.

SIMON. Desist, Susie, desist. Violence won't gather people to God. It only ingenders hostility to what you're trying to do.

SYLVESTER. You can't batter religion into a man like that.

SIMON. Religion is love, but that sort of thing is simply a nullification of religion.

SUSIE. Bitterness and wrath in exhortation



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is the only hope of rousing the pair of yous into a sense of coming and everlasting penalties.

SYLVESTER. Well, give it a miss, give it a miss to me now. Don't try to claw me into the kingdom of heaven. An' you only succeed in distempering piety when you try to mangle it into a man's emotions.

SIMON. Heaven is all the better, Susie, for being a long way off.

SYLVESTER. If I want to pray I do it voluntarily, but I'm not going to be goaded an' goaded into it.

SUSIE. I go away in a few days to help to nurse the wounded, an' God's merciful warnings may depart along with me, then sin'll usher the two of you into Gehenna for all eternity. Oh, if the two of you could only grasp the meaning of the word eternity! (*Bending down and looking up into their faces*) Time that had no beginning and never can have an end—an' there you'll be—two cockatrices creeping together, a desolation, an astonishment, a curse and a hissing from everlasting to everlasting. (*She goes into room.*)

SYLVESTER. Cheerful, what! Cockatrices—be-God, that's a good one, Simon!

SIMON. Always a trying thing to have to listen to one that's trying to push the

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kingdom of God into a reservation of a few yards.

SYLVESTER. A cockatrice! Now where did she manage to pick up that term of approbation, I wonder?

SIMON. From the Bible. An animal somewhere mentioned in the Bible, I think, that a serpent hatched out of a cock's egg.

SYLVESTER. A cock's egg! It couldn't have been the egg of an ordinary cock. Not the male of what we call a hen?

SIMON. I think so.

SYLVESTER. Well, be-God, that's a good one! You know Susie'll have to be told to disintensify her soul-huntin', for religion even isn't an excuse for saying that a man'll become a cockatrice.

SIMON. In a church, somehow or other, it seems natural enough, and even in the street it's alright, for one thing is as good as another in the wide open ear of the air, but in the delicate quietness of your own home it, it——

SYLVESTER. Jars on you!

SIMON. Exactly!

SYLVESTER. If she'd only confine her glory-to-God business to the festivals, Christmas, now, or even Easter, Simon, it would be recommendable; for a few days before Christmas, like the

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quiet raisin' of a curtain, an' a few days after, like the gentle lowerin' of one, there's nothing more . . . more——

SIMON. Appropriate. . . .

SYLVESTER. Exhilaratin' than the singin' of the Adestay Fidellis.

SIMON. She's damned pretty, an' if she dressed herself justly, she'd lift some man's heart up, an' toss down many another. It's a mystery now, what affliction causes the disablement, for most women of that kind are plain, an' when a woman's born plain she's born good. I wonder what caused the peculiar bend in Susie's nature? Narrow your imagination to the limit and you couldn't call it an avocation.

SYLVESTER (*giving the head of his pipe a sharp, quick blow on the palm of his hand to clear it*). Adoration.

SIMON. What?

SYLVESTER. Adoration, Simon, accordin' to the flesh. . . . She fancied Harry and Harry fancied Jessie, so she hides her rage an' loss in the love of a scorchin' Gospel.

SIMON. Strange, strange.

SYLVESTER. Oh, very curious, Simon.

SIMON. It's a problem, I suppose.

SYLVESTER. An inconsolable problem, Simon.

(MRS. FORAN *enters by door, helping in*

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MRS. HEEGAN, *who is pale and shivering with cold.*)

MRS. HEEGAN (*shivering and shuddering*).  
U-u-uh I feel the little stream of blood that's still trickling through me old veins icifyin' fast; u-uh.

MRS. FORAN. Madwoman, dear, to be waitin' out there on the quay an' a wind risin' as cold as a stepmother's breath, piercin' through your old bones, mockin' any effort a body would make to keep warm, an' (*suddenly rushing over to the fireplace in an agony of dismay, scattering SIMON and SYLVESTER, and whipping the frying-pan off the fire*)—The steak, the steak; I forgot the blasted steak an' onions fryin' on the fire! God Almighty, there's not as much as a bead of juice left in either of them. The scent of the burnin' would penetrate to the street, an' not one of you'd stir a hand to lift them out of danger. Oh, look at the condition they're in. Even the gospel-gunner couldn't do a little target practice by helpin' the necessity of a neighbour. (*As she goes out*) I can hear the love for your neighbours almost fizzlin' in your hearts.

MRS. HEEGAN (*pushing in to the fire, to SIMON and SYLVESTER*). Push to the right and push to the left till I get to the fosterin' fire. Time eatin'

his heart out, an' no sign of him yet. The two of them, the two of my legs is numb . . . an' the wind's risin' that'll make the sea heave an' sink under the boat to-night, under shaded lights an' the submarines about. (*SUSIE comes in, goes over to window, and looks out.*) Hours ago the football match must have been over, an' no word of him yet, an' all drinkin' if they won, an' all drinkin' if they lost; with Jessie hitchin' on after him, an' no one thinkin' of me an' the maintenance money.

SYLVESTER. He'll come back in time; he'll have to come back; he must come back.

SIMON. He got the goals, Mrs. Heegan, that won the last two finals, and it's only fair he'd want to win this, which'll mean that the Cup won before two——

SYLVESTER (*butting in*). Times hand runnin'.

SIMON. Two times consecutively before, makin' the Cup the property of the Club.

SYLVESTER. Exactly!

MRS. HEEGAN. The chill's residin' in my bones, an' feelin's left me just the strength to shiver. He's overstayed his leave a lot, an' if he misses now the tide that's waitin', he skulks behind desertion from the colours.

SUSIE. On Active Service that means death at dawn.

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MRS. HEEGAN. An' my governmental money grant would stop at once.

SUSIE. That would gratify Miss Jessie Taite, because you put her weddin' off with Harry till after the duration of the war, an' cut her out of the allowance.

SYLVESTER (*with a sickened look at SIMON*). Dtch, dtch, dtch, the way the women wag the worst things out of happenings! (*To the women*) My God Almighty, he'll be back in time an' fill yous all with disappointment.

MRS. HEEGAN. She's coinin' money workin' at munitions, an' doesn't need to eye the little that we get from Harry; for one evening hurryin' with him to the pictures she left her bag behind, an' goin' through it what would you think I found?

SUSIE. A saucy book, now, or a naughty picture?

MRS. HEEGAN. Lion and Unicorn standin' on their Jew ay mon draw. With all the rings an' dates, an' rules an' regulations.

SIMON. What was it, Mrs. Heegan?

MRS. HEEGAN. Spaced an' lined; signed an' signaturred nestlin' in a blue envelope to keep it warm.

SYLVESTER (*testily*). Oh, sing it out, woman,



an' don't be takin' the value out of what you're goin' to tell us.

MRS. HEEGAN. A Post Office Savings Bank Book.

SYLVESTER. Oh, hairy enough, eh?

SIMON. How much, Mrs. Heegan?

MRS. HEEGAN. Pounds an' shillings with the pence missin'; backed by secrecy, an' security guaranteed by Act of Parliament.

SYLVESTER (*impatiently*). Dtch, dtch. Yes, yes, woman, but how much was it?

MRS. HEEGAN. Two hundred an' nineteen pounds, sixteen shillings, an' no pence.

SYLVESTER. Be-God, a nice little nest egg, right enough!

SUSIE. I hope in my heart that she came by it honestly, and that she remembers that it's as true now as when it was first spoken that it's harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.

SIMON. And she hidin' it all under a veil of silence, when there wasn't the slightest fear of any of us bein' jealous of her.

*(A tumult is heard on the floor over their heads, followed by a crash of breaking delf. They are startled, and listen attentively.)*

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MRS. HEEGAN (*breaking the silence*). Oh, there he's at it again. An' she sayin' that he was a pattern husband since he came home on leave, merry-making with her an' singin' dolorously the first thing every mornin'. I was thinkin' there'd be a rough house sometime over her lookin' so well after his long absence . . . you'd imagine now, the trenches would have given him some idea of the sacredness of life!

(*Another crash of breaking delfware.*)

MRS. HEEGAN. An' the last week of his leave she was too fond of breakin' into song in front of him.

SYLVESTER. Well, she's gettin' it now for goin' round heavin' her happiness in the poor man's face.

(*A crash, followed by screams from MRS. FORAN.*)

SUSIE. I hope he won't be running down here as he often does.

SIMON (*a little agitated*). I couldn't stay here an' listen to that; I'll go up and stop him: he might be killing the poor woman.

MRS. HEEGAN. Don't do anything of the kind, Simon; he might down you with a hatchet or something.

SIMON. Phuh, I'll keep him off with the

left, and hook him with the right. (*Putting on his hat and coat as he goes to the door*) Looking prim and careless'll astonish him. Monstrous to stay here, while he may be killing the woman.

MRS. HEEGAN (*to SIMON as he goes out*). For God's sake mind yourself, Simon.

SYLVESTER (*standing beside closed door on right with his ear close to one of the panels, listening intently*). Simon's a tidy little man with his fists, an' would make Teddy Foran feel giddy if he got home with his left hook. (*Crash.*) I wonder is that Simon knockin' down Foran, or Foran knockin' down Simon?

MRS. HEEGAN. If he came down an' we had the light low, an' kept quiet, he might think we were all out.

SYLVESTER. Shush. I can hear nothin' now. Simon must have awed him. Quiet little man, but when Simon gets goin'. Shush? No, nothin'. . . . Something unusual has happened. O, oh, be-God!

(*The door against which SYLVESTER is leaning bursts suddenly in. SYLVESTER is flung headlong to the floor, and MRS. FORAN, her hair falling wildly over her shoulders, a cut over her eye, frantic with fear, rushes in and scrambles in a frenzy of haste under the bed.*)

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

MRS. HEEGAN, *quickenened by fear, runs like a good one, followed by SUSIE, into the room, the door of which they bang after them.* SYLVESTER *hurriedly fights his way under the bed with* MRS. FORAN.)

MRS. FORAN (*speaking excitedly and jerkily as she climbs under the bed*). Flung his dinner into the fire, and started to smash the little things in the room. 'Tryin' to save the dresser, I got a box in the eye. I locked the door on him as I rushed out, an' before I was half-way down, he had one of the panels flyin' out with a hatchet!

SYLVESTER (*under the bed*). Whythehell didn'tyou sing out beforeyousent thedoor flyin' inontop o' me!

MRS. FORAN. How could I an' I flyin' before danger to me life?

SYLVESTER. Yes, an'you'vegot meinto a nice extremity now!

MRS. FORAN. An' I yelled to Simon Norton when he had me down, but the boyo only ran the faster out of the house!

SYLVESTER. Oh, an' the regal like way he went out to fight! Oh, I'm findin' out that everyone who wears a cocked hat isn't a Napoleon!

(TEDDY FORAN, MRS. FORAN'S husband,

## THE SILVER TASSIE

*enters by door, with a large, fancy, vividly yellow-coloured bowl, ornamented with crimson roses, in one hand and a hatchet in the other. He is big and powerful, rough and hardy. A man who would be dominant in a public-house, and whose opinions would be listened to with great respect. He is dressed in the khaki uniform of a soldier home on leave.)*

TEDDY. Under the bed, eh? Right place for a guilty conscience. I should have thrown you out of the window with the dinner you put before me. Out with you from under there, an' come up with your husband.

SUSIE (*opening suddenly door right, putting in her head, pulling it back and shutting door again*). God is looking at you, God is looking at you!

MRS. FORAN. I'll not budge an inch from where I am.

TEDDY (*looking under the bed and seeing SYLVESTER*). What are you doin' there encouragin' her against her husband?

SYLVESTER. You've no right to be rippin' open the poor woman's life of peace with violence.

TEDDY (*with indignation*). She's my wife, isn't she?

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

MRS. FORAN. Nice thing if I lose the sight of my eye with the cut you gave me!

TEDDY. She's my wife, isn't she? An' you've no legal right to be harbourin' her here, keepin' her from her household duties. Stunned I was when I seen her lookin' so well after me long absence. Blowin' her sighin' in me face all day, an' she sufferin' the tortures of hell for fear I'd miss the boat!

SYLVESTER. Go on up to your own home; you've no right to be violatin' this place.

TEDDY. You'd like to make her your cheery amee, would you? It's napoo, there, napoo, you little pip-squeak. I seen you an' her goin' down the street arm-in-arm.

SYLVESTER. Did you expect to see me goin' down the street leg-in-leg with her?

TEDDY. Thinkin' of her Ring-papers instead of her husband. (*To MRS. FORAN*) I'll teach you to be rippling with joy an' your husband goin' away! (*He shows the bowl.*) Your weddin' bowl, look at it; pretty, isn't it? Take your last eyeful of it now, for it's goin' west quick!

SUSIE (*popping her head in again*). God is watching you, God is watching you!

MRS. FORAN (*appealingly*). Teddy, Teddy, don't smash the poor weddin' bowl.

## THE SILVER TASSIE

TEDDY (*smashing the bowl with a blow of the hatchet*). It would be a pity, wouldn't it? Damn it, an' damn you. I'm off now to smash anything I missed, so that you'll have a gay time fittin' up the little home again by the time your loving husband comes back. You can come an' have a look, an' bring your mon amee if you like.

(*He goes out, and there is a pause as MRS. FORAN and SYLVESTER peep anxiously towards the door.*)

SYLVESTER. Cautious, now cautious; he might be lurking outside that door, there, ready to spring on you the minute you show'd your nose!

MRS. FORAN. Me lovely little weddin' bowl, me lovely little weddin' bowl!

(*TEDDY is heard breaking things in the room above.*)

SYLVESTER (*creeping out from under the bed*). Oh, he is gone up. He was a little cow'd, I think, when he saw me.

MRS. FORAN. Me little weddin' bowl, wrapp'd in tissue paper, an' only taken out for a few hours every Christmas—me poor little weddin' bowl.

SUSIE (*popping her head in*). God is watching—oh, he's gone!



## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

SYLVESTER (*joyful*). Vanished! He was a little cow'd, I think, when he saw me.

(MRS. HEEGAN and SUSIE come into the room.)

MRS. FORAN. He's makin' a hash of every little thing we have in the house, Mrs. Heegan.

MRS. HEEGAN. Go inside to the room, Mrs. Foran, an' if he comes down again, we'll say you ran out to the street.

MRS. FORAN (*going into room*). My poor little weddin' bowl that I might have had for generations!

SUSIE (*who has been looking out of the window, excitedly*). They're comin', they're comin': a crowd with a concertina; some of them carrying Harry on their shoulders, an' others are carrying that Jessie Taite too, holding a silver cup in her hands. Oh, look at the shameful way she's showing her legs to all who like to have a look at them!

MRS. HEEGAN. Never mind Jessie's legs—what we have to do is to hurry him out in time to catch the boat.

(*The sound of a concertina playing in the street outside has been heard, and the noise of a marching crowd. The crowd stop at the house. Shouts are heard*—"Up the Avondales!" "Up

## THE SILVER TASSIE

Harry Heegan and the Avondales! ”  
*Then steps are heard coming up the stairs, and first SIMON NORTON enters, holding the door ceremoniously wide open to allow HARRY to enter, with his arm around JESSIE, who is carrying a silver cup joyously, rather than reverentially, elevated, as a priest would elevate a chalice. HARRY is wearing a khaki trousers, a military cap stained with trench mud, a vivid orange-coloured jersey with black collar and cuffs. He is twenty-three years of age, tall, with the sinewy muscles of a manual worker made flexible by athletic sport. He is a typical young worker, enthusiastic, very often boisterous, sensible by instinct rather than by reason. He has gone to the trenches as unthinkingly as he would go to the polling booth. He isn't naturally stupid; it is the stupidity of persons in high places that has stupefied him. He has given all to his masters, strong heart, sound lungs, healthy stomach, lusty limbs and the little mind that education has permitted to develop sufficiently to make all the rest a little more useful. He is excited*

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*now with the sweet and innocent insanity of a fine achievement, and the rapid lowering of a few drinks.*

JESSIE is twenty-two or so, responsive to all the animal impulses of life. Ever dancing round, in and between the world, the flesh and the devil. She would be happy climbing with a boy among the heather on Howth Hill, and could play ball with young men on the swards of the Phœnix Park. She gives her favour to the prominent and popular. HARRY is her favourite: his strength and speed has won the Final for his club, he wears the ribbon of the D.C.M. It is a time of spiritual and animal exaltation for her.

BARNEY BAGNAL, a soldier mate of HARRY'S, stands a little shyly near the door, with a pleasant, good-humoured grin on his rather broad face. He is the same age as HARRY, just as strong, but not so quick, less finely formed and not so sensitive; able to take most things quietly, but savage and wild when he becomes enraged. He is fully dressed with topcoat buttoned on him, and he carries HARRY'S on his arm.)

## THE SILVER TASSIE

HARRY (*joyous and excited*). Won, won, won, be-God; by the odd goal in five. Lift it up, lift it up, Jessie, sign of youth, sign of strength, sign of victory!

MRS. HEEGAN (*to SYLVESTER*). I knew, now, Harry would come back in time to catch the boat.

HARRY (*to JESSIE*). Leave it here, leave it down here, Jessie, under the picture, the picture of the boy that won the final!

MRS. HEEGAN. A parcel of sandwiches, a bottle of whisky an' some magazines to take away with you an' Barney, Harry.

HARRY. Napoo sandwiches, an' napoo magazines: look at the cup, eh? The cup that Harry won, won by the odd goal in five! (*To BARNEY*) The song that the little Jock used to sing, Barney, what was it? The little Jock we left shrivellin' on the wire after the last push?

BARNEY. "Will ye no come back again?"

HARRY. No, no, the one we all used to sing with him, "The Silver Tassie". (*Pointing to cup*) There it is, the Silver Tassie, won by the odd goal in five kicked by Harry Heegan.

MRS. HEEGAN. Watch your time, Harry, watch your time.

JESSIE. He's watching it, he's watching it—for God's sake don't get fussy, Mrs. Heegan.

HARRY. They couldn't take their beatin' like men. . . . Play the game, play the game, why the hell couldn't they play the game? (*To BARNEY*) See the President of the Club, Dr. Forby Maxwell, shaking hands with me, when he was giving me the cup, "Well done, Heegan!" The way they yell'd and jump'd when they put in the equalising goal in the first half!

BARNEY. Ay, a fluke, that's what it was; a lowsey fluke.

MRS. HEEGAN (*holding HARRY's coat up for him to put it on*). Here, your coat, Harry, slip it on while you're talkin'.

HARRY (*putting it on*). Alright, keep smiling, don't fuss. (*To the rest*) Grousing the whole time they were chasing the ball; an' when they lost it "Referee, referee, offside, referee . . . foul there, ey, open your eyes, referee!"

JESSIE. And we scream'd and shout'd them down with "Play the game, Primrose Rovers, play the game!"

BARNEY. You ran them off their feet till they nearly stood still.

MRS. FORAN (*has been peeping twice in timidly from the room and now comes in to the rest*). Somebody run up an' bring Teddy down for fear he'd be left behind.

I THE SILVER TASSIE

SYLVESTER (*to HARRY*). Your haversack an' trench tools, Harry; haversack first, isn't it?

HARRY (*fixing his haversack*). Haversack, haversack, don't rush me. (*To the rest*) But when I got the ball, Barney, once I got the ball, the rain began to fall on the others. An' the last goal, the goal that put us one ahead, the winning goal, that was a-a-eh-a stunner!

BARNEY. A beauty, me boy, a hot beauty.

HARRY. Slipping by the back rushing at me like a mad bull, steadying a moment for a drive, seeing in a flash the goalie's hands sent with a shock to his chest by the force of the shot, his half-stunned motion to clear, a charge, and then carrying him, the ball and all with a rush into the centre of the net!

BARNEY (*enthusiastically*). Be-God, I did get a thrill when I seen you puttin' him sittin' on his arse in the middle of the net!

MRS. FORAN (*from the door*). One of yous do go up an' see if Teddy's ready to go.

MRS. HEEGAN (*to HARRY*). Your father'll carry your kit-bag, an' Jessie'll carry your rifle as far as the boat.

HARRY (*irritably*). Oh, damn it, woman, give your wailin' over for a minute!

MRS. HEEGAN. You've got only a few bare minutes to spare, Harry.

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

HARRY. We'll make the most of them, then.  
(*To BARNEY*) Out with one of them wine-  
virgins we got in "The Mill in the Field",  
Barney, and we'll rape her in a last hot moment  
before we set out to kiss the guns!

(*SIMON has gone into room and returned  
with a gun and a kit-bag. He crosses  
to where BARNEY is standing.*)

BARNEY (*taking a bottle of wine from his  
pocket*). Empty her of her virtues, eh?

HARRY. Spill it out, Barney, spill it out. . . .  
(*Seizing silver cup, and holding it towards BARNEY*)  
Here, into the cup, be-God. A drink out of  
the cup, out of the Silver Tassie!

BARNEY (*who has removed the cap and taken  
out the cork*). Here she is now. . . . Ready for  
anything, stripp'd to the skin!

JESSIE. No double-meaning talk, Barney.

SUSIE (*haughtily, to JESSIE*). The men that are  
defending us have leave to bow themselves  
down in the House of Rimmon, for the men  
that go with the guns are going with God.

(*BARNEY pours wine into the cup for  
HARRY and into a glass for himself.*)

HARRY (*to JESSIE*). Jessie, a sup for you.  
(*She drinks from the cup.*) An' a drink for me.  
(*He drinks.*) Now a kiss while our lips are wet.  
(*He kisses her.*) Christ, Barney, how would you



like to be retreating from the fairest face and (*lifting JESSIE's skirt a little*)—and the trimmest, slimmest little leg in the parish? Napoo, Barney, to everyone but me!

MRS. FORAN. One of you go up, an' try to get my Teddy down.

BARNEY (*lifting SUSIE's skirt a little*). Napoo, Harry, to everyone but——

SUSIE (*angrily, pushing BARNEY away from her*). You khaki-cover'd ape, you, what are you trying to do? Manhandle the lassies of France, if you like, but put on your gloves when you touch a woman that seeketh not the things of the flesh.

HARRY (*putting an arm round SUSIE to mollify her*). Now, Susie, Susie, lengthen your temper for a passing moment, so that we may bring away with us the breath of a kiss to the shell-bullied air of the trenches. . . . Besides, there's nothing to be ashamed of—it's not a bad little leggie at all.

SUSIE (*slipping her arm round HARRY's neck, and looking defiantly at BARNEY*). I don't mind what Harry does; I know he means no harm, not like other people. Harry's different.

JESSIE. You'll not forget to send me the German helmet home from France, Harry?

SUSIE (*trying to rest her head on HARRY's*

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*breast*). I know Harry, he's different. It's his way. I wouldn't let anyone else touch me, but in some way or another I can tell Harry's different.

JESSIE (*putting her arm round HARRY under SUSIE's in an effort to dislodge it*). Susie, Harry wants to be free to keep his arm round me during his last few moments here, so don't be pulling him about!

SUSIE (*shrinking back a little*). I was only saying that Harry was different.

MRS. FORAN. For God's sake, will someone go up for Teddy, or he won't go back at all!

TEDDY (*appearing at door*). Damn anxious for Teddy to go back! Well, Teddy's goin' back, an' he's left everything tidy upstairs so that you'll not have much trouble sortin' things out. (*To HARRY*) The Club an' a crowd's waitin' outside to bring us to the boat before they go to the spread in honour of the final. (*Bitterly*) A party for them while we muck off to the trenches!

HARRY (*after a slight pause, to BARNEY*). Are you game, Barney?

BARNEY. What for?

HARRY. To go to the spread and hang the latch for another night?

BARNEY (*taking his rifle from SIMON and sling-*

*ing it over his shoulder*). No, no, napoo desertin' on Active Service. Deprivation of pay an' the rest of your time in the front trenches. No, no. We must go back!

MRS. HEEGAN. No, no, Harry. You must go back.

SIMON,  
SYLVESTER } *(together)*. You must go back.  
and SUSIE }

VOICES OF CROWD OUTSIDE. They must go back! *(The ship's siren is heard blowing.)*

SIMON. The warning signal.

SYLVESTER. By the time they get there, they'll be unslinging the gangways!

SUSIE *(handing HARRY his steel helmet)*. Here's your helmet, Harry. *(He puts it on.)*

MRS. HEEGAN. You'll all nearly have to run for it now!

SYLVESTER. I've got your kit-bag, Harry.

SUSIE. I've got your rifle.

SIMON. I'll march in front with the cup, after Conroy with the concertina.

TEDDY. Come on: ong, avong to the trenches!

HARRY *(recklessly)*. Jesus, a last drink, then! *(He raises the Silver Cup, singing):*

Gae bring to me a pint of wine,  
And fill it in a silver tassie;

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

BARNEY (*joining in vigorously*):

. . . . . a silver tassie.

HARRY:

That I may drink before I go,  
A service to my bonnie lassie.

BARNEY:

. . . . . bonnie lassie.

HARRY:

The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith,  
Full loud the wind blows from the  
ferry  
The ship rides at the Berwick Law,  
An' I must leave my bonnie Mary!

BARNEY:

. . . . . leave my bonnie Mary!

HARRY:

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,  
The glittering spears are ranked ready;

BARNEY:

. . . glittering spears are ranked ready;

HARRY:

The shouts of war are heard afar,  
The battle closes thick and bloody.

BARNEY:

. . . . . closes thick and bloody.

HARRY:

| It's not the roar of sea or shore,  
| That makes me longer wish to tarry,

## THE SILVER TASSIE

/ Nor shouts of war that's heard afar—  
/ It's leaving thee, my bonnie lassie!

BARNEY:

. . leaving thee, my bonnie lassie!

TEDDY. Come on, come on.

(SIMON, SYLVESTER and SUSIE go out.)

VOICES OUTSIDE:

Come on from your home to the boat;

Carry on from the boat to the camp.

(TEDDY and BARNEY go out. HARRY and JESSIE follow; as HARRY reaches the door, he takes his arm from round JESSIE and comes back to MRS. HEEGAN.)

VOICES OUTSIDE. From the camp up to the lines to the trenches.

HARRY (*shyly and hurriedly kissing* MRS. HEEGAN). Well, good-bye, old woman.

MRS. HEEGAN. Good-bye, my son.

(HARRY goes out. The chorus of "The Silver Tassie", accompanied by a concertina, can be heard growing fainter till it ceases. MRS. FORAN goes out timidly. MRS. HEEGAN pokes the fire, arranges the things in the room, and then goes to the window and looks out. After a pause, the loud and long blast of the ship's siren is heard. The light on the masthead, seen through the window,

## THE SILVER TASSIE

### ACT I

*moves slowly away, and MRS. HEEGAN with a sigh, "Ah dear", goes over to the fire and sits down. A slight pause, then MRS. FORAN returns to the room.)*

MRS. FORAN. Every little bit of china I had in the house is lyin' above in a mad an' muddled heap like the flotsum an' jetsum of the seashore!

MRS. HEEGAN (*with a deep sigh of satisfaction*). Thanks be to Christ that we're after managin' to get the three of them away safely



## ACT II

*(In the war zone: a scene of jagged and lacerated ruin of what was once a monastery. At back a lost wall and window are indicated by an arched piece of broken coping pointing from the left to the right, and a similar piece of masonry pointing from the right to the left. Between these two lacerated fingers of stone can be seen the country stretching to the horizon where the front trenches are. Here and there heaps of rubbish mark where houses once stood. From some of these lean, dead hands are protruding. Further on spiky stumps of trees which were once a small wood. The ground is dotted with rayed and shattered shell holes. Across the horizon in the red glare can be seen the criss-cross pattern of the barbed wire bordering the trenches. In the sky sometimes a green star, sometimes a white star, burns. Within the broken archway to the left is an arched entrance to another part*



## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*of the monastery, used now as a Red Cross Station. In the wall, right, near the front is a stained-glass window, background green, figure of the Virgin, white-faced, wearing a black robe, lights inside making the figure vividly apparent. Further up from this window is a life-size crucifix. A shell has released an arm from the cross, which has caused the upper part of the figure to lean forward with the released arm outstretched towards the figure of the Virgin. Underneath the crucifix on a pedestal, in red letters, are the words: PRINCEPS PACIS. Almost opposite the crucifix is a gunwheel to which BARNEY is tied. At the back, in the centre, where the span of the arch should be, is the shape of a big howitzer gun, squat, heavy underpart, with a long, sinister barrel now pointing towards the front at an angle of forty-five degrees. At the base of the gun a piece of wood is placed on which is chalked, HYDE PARK CORNER. On another piece of wood near the entrance of the Red Cross Station is chalked, NO HAWKERS OR STREET CRIES PERMITTED HERE. In the near centre is a brazier in which a fire is burning. Crouching near the fire is a soldier whose clothes are covered with mud and splashed with blood.*

## THE SILVER TASSIE

*Every feature of the scene seems a little distorted from its original appearance. Rain is falling steadily; its fall worried now and again by fitful gusts of a cold wind. A small organ is heard playing slow and stately notes as the curtain rises.)*

*(After a pause, the CROUCHER, without moving, intones dreamily)—*

CROUCHER. And the hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of a valley.

And I looked and saw a great multitude that stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

And he said unto me, Son of man, can this exceeding great army become a valley of dry bones?

*(The music ceases, and a voice in the part of the monastery left standing, intones: Kyr . . . ie . . . e . . . eleison. Kyr . . . ie . . . e . . . eleison, followed by the answer: Christe . . . eleison.)*

CROUCHER *(resuming)*. And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. And he said, prophesy and say unto the wind, come from the four winds a breath and

breathe upon these living that they may die.

*(As he pauses the voice in the monastery is heard again: Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.)*

CROUCHER *(resuming)*. And I prophesied, and the breath came out of them, and the sinews came away from them, and behold a shaking, and their bones fell asunder, bone from his bone, and they died, and the exceeding great army became a valley of dry bones.

*(The voice from the monastery is heard, clearly for the first half of the sentence, then dying away towards the end: Ascendat in nobis Dominus ignem sui amoris, et flammam aeternae caritatis.)*

*(A group of soldiers come in from fatigue. They are wet and cold, and they are sullen-faced. They form a circle around the brazier and stretch their hands towards the blaze.)*

1ST SOLDIER. Cold and wet and tir'd.

2ND SOLDIER. Wet and tir'd and cold.

3RD SOLDIER. Tir'd and cold and wet.

4TH SOLDIER *(very like TEDDY)*. Twelve blasted hours of ammunition transport fatigue!

## THE SILVER TASSIE

1ST SOLDIER. Twelve weary hours.

2ND SOLDIER. And wasting hours.

3RD SOLDIER. And hot and heavy hours.

1ST SOLDIER. Toiling and thinking to build the wall of force that blocks the way from here to home.

2ND SOLDIER. Lifting shells.

3RD SOLDIER. Carrying shells.

4TH SOLDIER. Piling shells.

1ST SOLDIER. In the falling, pissing rine and whistling wind.

2ND SOLDIER. The whistling wind and falling, drenching rain.

3RD SOLDIER. The God-dam rain and blasted whistling wind.

1ST SOLDIER. And the shirkers sife at home coil'd up at ease.

2ND SOLDIER. Shells for us and pianos for them.

3RD SOLDIER. Fur coats for them and winding-sheets for us.

4TH SOLDIER. Warm.

2ND SOLDIER. And dry.

1ST SOLDIER. An' 'appy.

*(A slight pause.)*

BARNEY. An' they call it re-cu-per-at-ing!

1ST SOLDIER *(reclining near the fire)*. Gawd, I'm sleepy.

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

2ND SOLDIER (*reclining*). Tir'd and lousey.

3RD SOLDIER (*reclining*). Damp and shaking.

4TH SOLDIER (*murmuringly, the rest joining him*). Tir'd and lousey, an' wet an' sleepy, but mother call me early in the morning.

1ST SOLDIER (*dreamily*). Wen I thinks of 'ome, I thinks of a field of dysies.

THE REST (*dreamily*). Wen 'e thinks of 'ome, 'e thinks of a field of dysies.

1ST SOLDIER (*chanting dreamily*). I sees the missus paryding along Walham Green,  
Through the jewels an' silks on the costers' carts,

Emmie a-pulling her skirt an' muttering,  
"A balloon, a balloon, I wants a balloon",  
The missus a-tugging 'er on, an' sying,  
"A balloon, for shime, an' your father fighting:  
You'll wait till 'e's 'ome, an' the bands a-  
plying!"

(*He pauses.*)

(*Suddenly*) But wy'r we 'ere, wy'r we 'ere—that's wot I wants to know!

2ND SOLDIER. God only knows—or else, perhaps, a red-cap.

1ST SOLDIER (*chanting*). Tabs'll murmur, 'em an' 'aw, an' sy: "You're 'ere because you're Point nine double o, the sixth platoon an' forty-eight battalion,

## THE SILVER TASSIE

The Yellow Plumes that pull'd a bow at Crecy,  
 And gave to fame a leg up on the path to glory;  
 Now with the howitzers of the 'Twenty-first  
 Division,

Tiking life easy with the Army of the Marne,  
 An' all the time the battered Conchie squeals,  
 'It's one or two men looking after business'".

3RD SOLDIER. An' saves his blasted skin!

1ST SOLDIER (*chanting*). The padre gives a  
 fag an' softly whispers:

"Your king, your country an' your muvver 'as  
 you 'ere."

An' last time 'ome on leave, I awks the missus:

"The good God up in heaven, Bill, 'e knows,  
 An' I gets the seperytion moneys reg'lar".

(*He sits up suddenly.*)

But wy'r we 'ere, wy'r we 'ere,—that's wot I  
 wants to know?

THE REST (*chanting sleepily*). Why 's 'e 'ere,  
 why 's 'e 'ere—that's wot 'e wants to know!

BARNEY (*singing to the air of second bar in  
 chorus of "Auld Lang Syne"*). We're here be-  
 cause we're here, because we're here, because  
 we're here!

(*Each slides into an attitude of sleep—even  
 BARNEY'S head droops a little. The  
 CORPORAL, followed by the VISITOR, ap-  
 pears at back. The VISITOR is a portly*

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*man with a rubicund face; he is smiling to demonstrate his ease of mind, but the lines are a little distorted with an ever-present sense of anxiety. He is dressed in a semi-civilian, semi-military manner—dark worsted suit, shrapnel helmet, a haversack slung round his shoulder, a brown belt round his middle, black top boots and spurs, and he carries a cane. His head is bent between his shoulders, and his shoulders are crouched a little.)*

VISITOR. Yes, to-morrow, I go a little further. Penetrate a little deeper into danger. Foolish, yes, but then it's an experience; by God, it's an experience. The military authorities are damned strict—won't let a man plunge!

CORPORAL. In a manner of speakin', sir, only let you see the arses of the guns.

VISITOR (*not liking the remark*). Yes, no; no, oh yes. Damned strict, won't let a man plunge! (*Suddenly, with alarm*) What's that, what was that?

CORPORAL. Wha' was what?

VISITOR. A buzz, I thought I heard a buzz.

CORPORAL. A buzz?

VISITOR. Of an aeroplane.



CORPORAL. Didn't hear. Might have been a bee.

VISITOR. No, no; don't think it was a bee. (*Arranging helmet with his hands*) Damn shrapnel helmet; skin tight; like a vice; hurts the head. Rather be without it; but, regulations, you know. Military authorities damn particular—won't let a man plunge!

VISITOR (*seeing BARNEY*). Aha, what have we got here, what have we got here?

CORPORAL (*to BARNEY*). 'Tshun! (*To the VISITOR*) Regimental misdemeanour, sir.

VISITOR (*to BARNEY*). Nothing much, boy, nothing much?

BARNEY (*chanting softly*):

A Brass-hat pullin' the bedroom curtains  
Between himself, the world an' the Estaminay's  
daughter,

In a pyjama'd hurry ran down an' phon'd  
A Tommie was chokin' an Estaminay cock,  
An' I was pinch'd as I was puttin' the bird  
Into a pot with a pint of peas.

CORPORAL (*chanting hoarsely*):

And the hens all droop, for the loss has made  
The place a place of desolation!

VISITOR (*reprovingly, to the CORPORAL*). Seriously, Corporal, seriously, please. Sacred, sacred: property of the citizen of a friendly

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

State, sacred. On Active Service, serious to steal a fowl, a cock. (*To BARNEY*) The uniform, the cause, boy, the corps. Infra dignitatem, boy, infra dignitatem.

BARNEY. Wee, wee.

VISITOR (*pointing to reclining soldiers*). Taking it easy, eh?

CORPORAL. Done in; transport fatigue; twelve hours.

VISITOR. Um, not too much rest, corporal. Dangerous. Keep 'em moving much as possible. Too much rest—bad. Sap, sap, sap.

CORPORAL (*pointing to the left*). Bit of monastery left intact. Hold services there; troops off to front line. Little organ plays.

VISITOR. Splendid. Bucks 'em up. Gives 'em peace.

*(A Staff Officer enters suddenly, passing by the VISITOR with a springing hop, so that he stands in the centre with the VISITOR on his right and the CORPORAL on his left. He is prim, pert, and polished, superfine khaki uniform, gold braid, crimson tabs, and gleaming top boots. He speaks his sentences with a gasping importance.)*

CORPORAL (*stiffening*). 'Shun! Staff!

SOLDIERS (*springing to their feet—the*

CROUCHER *remains as he is, with a sleepy alertness*). Staff! 'Shun!

CORPORAL (*bellowing at the CROUCHER*). Eh, you there: 'shun! Staff!

CROUCHER (*calmly*). Not able. Sick. Privilege. Excused duty.

STAFF WALLAH (*reading document*):

Battery Brigade Orders, F.A., 31 D 2.

Units presently recuperating, parade eight o'clock P.M.

Attend Lecture organised by Society for amusement and mental development, soldiers at front.

Subject: Habits of those living between Frigid Zone and Arctic Circle.

Lecturer: Mr. Melville Sprucer.

Supplementary Order: Units to wear gas masks.

As you were.

(*The STAFF WALLAH departs as he came with a springing hop. The VISITOR and the CORPORAL relax, and stroll down towards the R.C. Station. The soldiers relax too, seeking various positions of ease around the fire.*)

VISITOR (*indicating R.C. Station*). Ah, in here. We'll just pop in here for a minute. And then pop out again.

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

(*He and the CORPORAL go into the R.C. Station. A pause.*)

1ST SOLDIER (*chanting and indicating that he means the VISITOR by looking in the direction of the R.C. Station*):

God's blessin' on the 'eads of the thoughtless  
blighters,  
Mikin' miseries of war so bright and 'ome-  
like.

Pictures'll bloom in the illustriyted pipers  
Of the minds of the Tommies agoing upstairs.

2ND SOLDIER (*chanting*):

The perky bastard's cautious nibbling  
In a safe, safe shelter at danger queers me.  
Furiously feeling he's up to the neck in  
The whirl and the sweep of the front-line  
fighting.

3RD SOLDIER (*chanting*):

In his full-blown, chin-strapp'd, shrapnel  
helmet,  
He'll pat a mug on the back and murmur,  
"Here's a stand-fast Tauntonshire before  
me",  
And the mug, on his feet, 'll whisper "yessir".

4TH SOLDIER (*chanting*):

Like a bride, full-flush'd, 'e'll sit down and  
listen  
To every word of the goddam sermon,

From the cushy-soul'd, word-spreading, yellow-streaked dud.

BARNEY (*chanting*). Who wouldn't make a patch on a Tommie's backside.

(*A pause.*)

1ST SOLDIER. 'Ow long have we been resting 'ere?

2ND SOLDIER. A month.

3RD SOLDIER. Twenty-nine days, twenty-three hours and (*looking at watch*) twenty-three minutes.

4TH SOLDIER. Thirty-seven minutes more'll make it thirty days.

CROUCHER:

Thirty days hath September, April, June and November—

November—that's the month when I was born—November.

Not the beginning, not the end, but the middle of November.

Near the valley of the Thames in the middle of November.

Shall I die at the start, near the end, in the middle of November?

1ST SOLDIER (*nodding towards the CROUCHER*). One more scrap, an' 'e'll be Ay one in the kingdom of the bawmy.

2ND SOLDIER. Perhaps they have forgotten.

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

3RD SOLDIER. Forgotten.

4TH SOLDIER. Forgotten us.

1ST SOLDIER. If the blighters at the front would time their grouching.

THE REST. Tame their grouching.

2ND SOLDIER. And the wounded cease to stare their silent scorning.

THE REST. Passing by us, carried cushy on the stretchers.

3RD SOLDIER. We have beaten out the time upon the duckboard.

4TH SOLDIER. Stiff standing watch'd the sunrise from the firestep.

2ND SOLDIER. Stiff standing from the firestep watch'd the sunset.

3RD SOLDIER. Have bless'd the dark wiring of the top with curses.

2ND SOLDIER. And never a ray of leave.

3RD SOLDIER. To have a quiet drunk.

1ST SOLDIER. Or a mad mowment to rustle a Judy.

(3RD SOLDIER takes out a package of cigarettes; taking one himself he hands the package round. Each takes one, and the man nearest to BARNEY, kneeling up, puts one in his mouth and lights it for him. They all smoke silently for a few moments, sitting up round the fire.)

2ND SOLDIER (*chanting very earnestly and quietly*):

God, and I smok'd and walk'd and watch'd the  
Dance of a golden Brimstone butterfly,  
To the rustling pipe of a greenfinch resting  
In a drowsy, brambled lane in Cumberland.

1ST SOLDIER:

God, and I smok'd and lifted cargoes  
From the laden shoulders of London's river-  
way;  
The holiday'd, roaring out courage and move-  
ment  
To the muscled machines of Tottenham Hot-  
spur.

3RD SOLDIER:

To hang here even a little longer,  
Lounging through fear-swell'd, anxious  
moments;  
The hinderparts of the god of battles  
Shading our war-tir'd eyes from his flaming  
face.

BARNEY:

If you creep to rest in a clos'd-up coffin,  
A tail of comrades seeing you safe home;  
Or a kernel lost in a shell exploding—  
It's all, sure, only in a lifetime.

ALL TOGETHER:

Each sparrow, hopping, irresponsible,



## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT I

Is indentur'd in God's mighty memory;  
And we, more than they all, shall not be lost  
In the forgetfulness of the Lord of Hosts.

*(The VISITOR and the CORPORAL come from the Red Cross Station.)*

VISITOR *(taking out a cigarette case)*. Nurses too gloomy. Surgeons too serious. Doesn't do.

CORPORAL. All lying-down cases, sir. Pretty bad.

VISITOR *(who is now standing near the crucifix)*. All the more reason make things merry and bright. Lift them out of themselves. *(To the soldiers)* See you all to-morrow at lecture?

1ST SOLDIER *(rising and standing a little sheepishly before the VISITOR)*. Yessir, yessir.

THE REST. Yessir, yessir.

THE VISITOR. Good. Make it interesting. *(Searching in pocket)* Damn it, have I none? Ah, saved.

*(He takes a match from his pocket and is about to strike it carelessly on the arm of the crucifix, when the 1ST SOLDIER, with a rapid frightened movement, knocks it out of his hand.)*

1ST SOLDIER *(roughly)*. Blarst you, man, keep your peace-white paws from that!

2ND SOLDIER. The image of the Son of God.

3RD SOLDIER. Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

1ST SOLDIER (*reclining by the fire again*). There's a Gawd knocking abaht somewhere.

4TH SOLDIER. Wants Him to be sending us over a chit in the shape of a bursting shell.

THE VISITOR. Sorry put it across you. (*To CORPORAL*) Too much time to think. Nervy. Time to brood, brood; bad. Sap. Sap. Sap. (*Walking towards where he came in*) Must return quarters; rough and ready. Must stick it. There's a war on. Cheerio. Straight down road instead of round hill: shorter?

CORPORAL. Less than half as long.

THE VISITOR. Safe?

CORPORAL. Yes. Only drop shells off and on, cross roads. Ration party wip'd out week ago.

THE VISITOR. Go round hill. No hurry. General Officer's orders, no unnecessary risks. Must obey. Military Authorities damned particular—won't let a man plunge!

(*He and the CORPORAL go off. The soldiers in various attitudes are asleep around the fire. After a few moments' pause TWO STRETCHER-BEARERS come in slowly from left carrying a casualty. They pass through the sleeping soldiers*)

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*going towards the Red Cross Station. As they go they chant a verse, and as the verse is ending, they are followed by another pair carrying a second casualty.)*

1ST BEARERS (*chanting*):

Oh, bear it gently, carry it softly—  
A bullet or a shell said stop, stop, stop.  
It's had it's day, and it's left the play,  
Since it gamboll'd over the top, top, top.  
It's had its day and it's left the play,  
Since it gamboll'd over the top.

2ND BEARERS (*chanting*):

Oh, carry it softly, bear it gently—  
The beggar has seen it through, through,  
through.

If it 'adn't been 'im, if it 'adn't been 'im,  
It might 'ave been me or you, you, you.  
If it 'adn't been 'im, if it 'adn't been 'im,  
It might 'ave been me or you.

VOICE (*inside R.C. Station*). Easy, easy there;  
don't crowd.

1ST STRETCHER-BEARER (*to man behind*).  
Woa, woa, there, Bill, 'ouse full.

STRETCHER-BEARER (*behind, to those following*).  
Woa, woa; traffic blocked.

(*They leave the stretchers on the ground.*)

THE WOUNDED ON THE STRETCHERS (*chanting*):

Carry on, carry on to the place of pain,  
Where the surgeon spreads his aid, aid, aid.  
And we show man's wonderful work, well done,  
To the image God hath made, made, made,  
And we show man's wonderful work, well done,  
To the image God hath made!

When the future hours have all been spent,  
And the hand of death is near, near, near,  
Then a few, few moments and we shall find  
There'll be nothing left to fear, fear, fear,  
Then a few, few moments and we shall find  
There'll be nothing left to fear.

The power, the joy, the pull of life,  
The laugh, the blow, and the dear kiss,  
The pride and hope, the gain and loss,  
Have been temper'd down to this, this, this,  
The pride and hope, the gain and loss  
Have been temper'd down to this.

1ST STRETCHER-BEARER (*to* BARNEY). Oh,  
Barney, have they liced you up because you've  
kiss'd the Colonel's judy?

BARNEY. They lit on me stealin' Estaminay  
poulthry.

1ST STRETCHER-BEARER. A hen?

2ND STRETCHER-BEARER. A duck, again,  
Barney?

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

3RD STRETCHER-BEARER. A swan this time.

BARNEY (*chanting softly*):

A Brass-hat pullin' the bedroom curtains  
Between himself, the world an' the Estaminay's  
daughter,

In a pyjama'd hurry ran down and phon'd,  
A Tommie was chokin' an Estaminay cock;  
An' I was pinch'd as I was puttin' the bird  
Into a pot with a pint of peas.

1ST STRETCHER-BEARER. The red-tabb'd  
squit!

2ND STRETCHER-BEARER. The lousey map-  
scanner!

3RD STRETCHER-BEARER. We must keep up,  
we must keep up the morale of the awmy.

2ND STRETCHER-BEARER (*loudly*). Does e' eat  
well?

THE REST (*in chorus*). Yes, 'e eats well!

2ND STRETCHER-BEARER. Does 'e sleep well?

THE REST (*in chorus*). Yes, 'e sleeps well!

2ND STRETCHER-BEARER. Does 'e whore well?

THE REST (*in chorus*). Yes, 'e whores well!

2ND STRETCHER-BEARER. Does 'e fight well?

THE REST (*in chorus*). Napoo; 'e 'as to do  
the thinking for the Tommies!

VOICE (*from the R.C. Station*). Stretcher Party  
—carry on!

(*The BEARERS stoop with precision, attach*

## THE SILVER TASSIE

*their supports to the stretchers, lift them up and march slowly into the R.C. Station, chanting.)*

STRETCHER-BEARERS (*chanting*):

Carry on—we've one bugled reason why—

We've 'eard and answer'd the call, call, call.

There's no more to be said, for when we are  
dead,

We may understand it all, all, all.

There's no more to be said, for when we are  
dead,

We may understand it all.

*(They go out, leaving the scene occupied by the CROUCHER and the soldiers sleeping around the fire. The CORPORAL re-enters. He is carrying two parcels. He pauses, looking at the sleeping soldiers for a few moments, then shouts.)*

CORPORAL (*shouting*). Hallo, there, you sleepy blighters! Number 2, a parcel; and for you, Number 3. Get a move on—parcels!

*(The SOLDIERS wake up and spring to their feet.)*

CORPORAL. For you, Number 2. *(He throws a parcel to 2ND SOLDIER.)* Number 3. *(He throws the other parcel to 3RD SOLDIER.)*

3RD SOLDIER *(taking paper from around his parcel)*. Looks like a bundle of cigarettes.

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

1ST SOLDIER. Or a pack of cawds.

4TH SOLDIER. Or a prayer book.

3RD SOLDIER (*astounded*). Holy Christ, it is!

THE REST. What?

3RD SOLDIER. A prayer book!

4TH SOLDIER. In a green plush cover with a golden cross.

CROUCHER. Open it at the Psalms and sing that we may be saved from the life and death of the beasts that perish.

BARNEY. Per omnia saecula saeculorum.

2ND SOLDIER (*who has opened his parcel*). A ball, be God!

4TH SOLDIER. A red and yellow coloured rubber ball.

1ST SOLDIER. And a note.

2ND SOLDIER (*reading*). To play your way to the enemies' trenches when you all go over the top. Mollie.

1ST SOLDIER. See if it 'ops.

(*The 2ND SOLDIER hops the ball, and then kicks it from him. The CORPORAL intercepts it, and begins to dribble it across the stage. The 3RD SOLDIER tries to take it from him. The CORPORAL shouts "Offside, there!" They play for a few minutes with the ball, when*

## THE SILVER TASSIE

*suddenly the STAFF-WALLAH springs in and stands rigidly in centre.)*

CORPORAL (*stiff to attention as he sees the STAFF-WALLAH*). 'Shun. Staff!

*(All the soldiers stiffen. The CROUCHER remains motionless.)*

CORPORAL (*shouting to the CROUCHER*). You: 'shun. Staff!

CROUCHER. Not able. Sick. Excused duty.

STAFF-WALLAH (*reading document*):

Brigade Orders, C/X 143. B/Y 341. Regarding gas-masks. Gas-masks to be worn round neck so as to lie in front  $2\frac{1}{2}$  degrees from socket of left shoulder-blade, and  $2\frac{3}{4}$  degrees from socket of right shoulder-blade, leaving bottom margin to reach  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch from second button of lower end of tunic. Order to take effect from 6 A.M. following morning of date received. Dismiss!

*(He hops out again followed by CORPORAL.)*

1ST SOLDIER (*derisively*). Comprenneemoy.

3RD SOLDIER. Tray bong.

2ND SOLDIER (*who is standing in archway, back, looking scornfully after the STAFF-WALLAH, chanting*):

Jazzing back to his hotel he now goes gaily,  
Shelter'd and safe where the clock ticks tamely.  
His backside warming a cushion, downfill'd,



## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

Green clad, well splash'd with gold birds  
redbeak'd.

3RD SOLDIER (*taking up the chant*):

Hedg'd in by wine, red, white and amber,  
Pour'd trembling into glasses gleaming,  
To drink deep to a heroes' vintage,  
Press'd out to yield a world's renewing.

4TH SOLDIER:

Still standing on the white-clad tables.  
In green and purple porcelain vases,  
Patient of the life around them,  
Peep deeply blue and yellow blossoms.

1ST SOLDIER:

His last dim view of the front-line sinking  
Into the white-flesh'd breasts of a judy;  
Cuddling with proud, bright, amorous glances  
The thing salved safe from the mud of the  
trenches.

2ND SOLDIER:

His tunic reared in the lap of comfort,  
Peeps at the blood-stain'd jackets passing,  
Through colour-gay bars of ribbon jaunty,  
Fresh from a posh shop snug in Bond Street.

CROUCHER:

Shame and scorn play with and beat them,  
Till we anchor in their company;  
Then the decorations of security  
Become the symbols of self-sacrifice.

*(A pause.)*

1ST SOLDIER:

To-night as the hateful rine is falling,  
Drenching us all with a sickening dampness,  
We'll p'ride to dripe our gas-masks meekly,  
According to Staff-Wallah's new-born orders.

2ND SOLDIER:

A warning this that we'll soon be exiles  
From the freedom chance of life can give,  
To the front where you wait to be hurried  
    breathless,  
Murmuring how, how do you do, to God.

3RD SOLDIER:

Where hot with the sweat of mad endeavour,  
Crouching to scrape a toy-deep shelter,  
Quick-tim'd by hell's fast, frenzied drumfire  
Exploding in flaming death around us.

2ND SOLDIER:

God, unchanging, heart-sicken'd, shuddering,  
Gathereth the darkness of the night sky  
To mask His paling countenance from  
The blood dance of His self-slaying children.

3RD SOLDIER:

Stems of light shoot through the darkness,  
Fierce flowering to green and crimson star-  
    shells,  
Glowering their eyes of hate where once,  
Danced the gentle star of Bethlehem.

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

1ST SOLDIER:

Steel 'elmet, rifle, water-bottle,  
Trench tools, gas-mask, bay'net and cawtridges,  
Bundle of bandages, swab and rations  
Dictyting to body, soul and spirit.

3RD SOLDIER:

Stumbling, swiftly cursing, plodding,  
Lumbering, loitering, stumbling, grouching,  
Through mud and rain, and filth and danger,  
Flesh and blood seek slow the front line.

2ND SOLDIER:

Squeals of hidden laughter run through  
The screaming medley of the wounded—  
Christ, who bore the cross, still weary,  
Now trails a rope tied to a field gun.

*(As the last notes of the chanting are heard  
the CORPORAL comes rapidly in; he is  
excited but steady; pale-faced and  
grim.)*

CORPORAL. They attack. Along a wide  
front the enemy attacks. If they break through  
it may reach us even here.

SOLDIERS *(in chorus as they all put on gas-*  
*masks)*. They attack. The enemy attacks.

CORPORAL. Let us honour that in which we  
do put our trust. *turn*

SOLDIERS *(in chorus)*:

That it may not fail us in our time of need, *down*

*(The CORPORAL goes over to the gun and faces towards it, standing on the bottom step. The soldiers group around, each falling upon one knee, their forms crouched in a huddled act of obeisance. They are all facing the gun with their backs to the audience. The CROUCHER rises and joins them.)*

CORPORAL (*singing*):

Hail cool-hardened tower of steel emboss'd  
With the fever'd, figment thoughts of man;  
Guardian of our love and hate and fear,  
Speak for us to the inner ear of God!

SOLDIERS:

We believe in God and we believe in thee.

CORPORAL:

Dreams of line, of colour and of form;  
Dreams of music dead forever now;  
Dreams in bronze and dreams in stone have gone  
To make thee delicate and strong to kill.

SOLDIERS:

We believe in God and we believe in thee.

CORPORAL:

Jail'd in thy steel are hours of merriment  
Cadg'd from the pageant-dream of children's  
play;  
Too soon of the motley stripp'd that they may  
sweat

With them that toil for the glory of thy kingdom.

SOLDIERS:

We believe in God and we believe in thee.

CORPORAL:

Remember our women, sad-hearted, proud-fac'd,

Who've given the substance of their womb for shadows;

Their shrivel'd, empty breasts war tinselled  
For patient gifts of graves to thee.

SOLDIERS:

We believe in God and we believe in thee.

CORPORAL:

Dapple those who are shelter'd with disease,  
And women labouring with child,  
And children that play about the streets,  
With blood of youth expiring in its prime.

SOLDIERS:

We believe in God and we believe in thee.

CORPORAL:

Tear a gap through the soul of our mass'd  
enemies;

Grant them all the peace of death;  
Blow them swiftly into Abram's bosom,  
And mingle them with the joys of paradise!

SOLDIERS:

For we believe in God and we believe in thee.

## THE SILVER TASSIE

*(The sky has become vexed with a crimson glare, mixed with yellow streaks, and striped with pillars of rising brown and black smoke. The STAFF-WALLAH rushes in turbulent and wild, with his uniform disordered.)*

STAFF-WALLAH:

The enemy has broken through, broken through, broken through!

Every man born of woman to the guns, to the guns.

SOLDIERS: *Left for!*

To the guns, to the guns, to the guns!

STAFF-WALLAH:

Those at prayer, all in bed and the swillers drinking deeply in the pubs.

SOLDIERS:

To the guns, to the guns.

STAFF-WALLAH:

All the batsmen, every cook, every bitch's son that hides

A whiff of courage in his veins,

Shelter'd vigour in his body,

That can run, or can walk, even crawl—

Dig him out, dig him out, shove him on—

SOLDIERS:

To the guns!

*(The SOLDIERS hurry to their places led by*

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT II

*the STAFF-WALLAH to the gun. The gun swings around and points to the horizon; a shell is swung into the breech and a flash indicates the firing of the gun, searchlights move over the red glare of the sky; the scene darkens, stabbed with distant flashes and by the more vivid flash of the gun which the SOLDIERS load and fire with rhythmical movements while the scene is closing.)*



## ACT III

SCENE: *The upper end of an hospital ward. At right angles from back wall are two beds, one covered with a red quilt and the other with a white one. From the centre of the head of each bed is an upright having at the top a piece like a swan's neck, curving out over the bed, from which hangs a chain with a wooden cross-piece to enable weak patients to pull themselves into a sitting posture. To the left of these beds is a large glass double-door which opens on to the ground: one of the doors is open and a lovely September sun, which is setting, gives a glow to the garden.*

*Through the door two poplar trees can be seen silhouetted against the sky. To the right of this door is another bed covered with a black quilt. Little white discs are fixed to the head of each bed: on the first is the number 26, on the second 27, and on the third 28. Medical charts hang over each on the wall.*



## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*To the right is the fire-place facing down the ward. Farther on, to the right of the fire, is a door of a bathroom. In the corner, between the glass door and the fire, is a pedestal on which stands a statue of the Blessed Virgin; under the statue is written, "Mater Misericordiae, ora pro nobis". An easy chair, on which are rugs, is near the fire. In the centre is a white, glass-topped table on which are medicines, drugs and surgical instruments. On one corner is a vase of flowers. A locker is beside the head, and a small chair by the foot of each bed. Two electric lights, green shaded, hang from the ceiling, and a bracket light with a red shade projects from the wall over the fire-place. It is dusk, and the two lights suspended from the ceiling are lighted. The walls are a brilliant white.*

*SYLVESTER is in the bed numbered "26"; he is leaning upon his elbow looking towards the glass door.*

*SIMON, sitting down on the chair beside bed numbered "27", is looking into grounds.)*

*SYLVESTER (after a pause). Be God, isn't it a good one!*

*SIMON. Almost, almost, mind you, Sylvester, incomprehensible.*

SYLVESTER. To come here and find her fashion'd like a Queen of Sheba. God moves in a mysterious way, Simon.

SIMON. There's Surgeon Maxwell prancing after her now.

SYLVESTER (*stretching to see*). Heads together, eh? Be God, he's kissing her behind the trees! Oh, Susannah, Susannah, how are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

(HARRY HEEGAN *enters crouched in a self-propelled invalid chair; he wheels himself up to the fire. SYLVESTER slides down into the bed, and SIMON becomes interested in a book that he takes off the top of his locker. HARRY remains for a few moments beside the fire, and then wheels himself round and goes out as he came in; SYLVESTER raises himself in the bed, and SIMON leaves down the book to watch HARRY.*)

SYLVESTER. Down and up, up and down.

SIMON. Up and down, down and up.

SYLVESTER. Never quiet for a minute.

SIMON. Never able to hang on to an easy second.

SYLVESTER. Trying to hold on to the little finger of life.

SIMON. Half-way up to heaven.

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

SYLVESTER. And him always thinking of Jessie.

SIMON. And Jessie never thinking of him.

(SUSIE MONICAN, *in the uniform of a V.A.D. nurse, enters the ward by the glass door. She is changed, for it is clear that she has made every detail of the costume as attractive as possible. She has the same assertive manner, but dignity and a sense of importance have been added. Her legs, encased in silk stockings, are seen (and shown) to advantage by her short and smartly cut skirt. Altogether she is now a very handsome woman. Coming in she glances at the bed numbered 28, then pauses beside SYLVESTER and SIMON.*)

SUSIE. How is Twenty-eight?

SIMON and SYLVESTER (*together*). Travelling again.

SUSIE. Did he speak at all to you?

SYLVESTER. Dumb, Susie, dumb.

SIMON. Brooding, Susie; brooding, brooding.

SYLVESTER. Cogitatin', Susie; cogitatin', cogitatin'.

SUSIE (*sharply, to SYLVESTER*). It's ridiculous, Twenty-six, for you to be in bed. The Sister's altogether too indulgent to you. Why didn't

you pair of lazy devils entice him down to sit and cogitate under the warm wing of the sun in the garden?

SYLVESTER. Considerin' the low state of his general health.

SIMON. Aided by a touch of frost in the air.

SYLVESTER. Thinkin' it over we thought it might lead——

SIMON. To him getting an attack of double pneumonia.

SYLVESTER and SIMON (*together*). An' then he'd go off like—(*they blow through their lips*) poof—the snuff of a candle!

SUSIE. For the future during the period you are patients here, I am to be addressed as “Nurse Monican”, and not as “Susie”. Remember that, the pair of you, please.

(HARRY *wheels himself in again, crossing by her, and, going over to the fire, looks out into grounds.*)

SUSIE (*irritatedly, to SYLVESTER*). Number Twenty-six, look at the state of your quilt! You must make an effort to keep it tidy. Dtch, dtch, dtch, what would the matron say if she saw it!

SIMON (*with a nervous giggle*). He's an un-easy divil, Nurse Monican.

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

SUSIE (*hotly, to SIMON*). Yours is as bad as his, Twenty-seven. You mustn't lounge on your bed; it must be kept perfectly tidy (*she smooths the quilts*). Please don't make it necessary to mention this again. (*To HARRY*) Would you like to go down for a little while into the garden, Twenty-eight?

(*HARRY crouches, silent and moody.*)

SUSIE (*continuing*). After the sober rain of yesterday it is good to feel the new grace of the yellowing trees, and to get the fresh smell of the grass.

(*HARRY wheels himself round and goes out by the left.*)

SUSIE (*to SYLVESTER as she goes out*). Remember, Twenty-six, if you're going to remain in a comatose condition, you'll have to keep your bed presentable.

(*A pause.*)

SYLVESTER (*mimicking SUSIE*). Twenty-six, if you're goin' to remeen in a comatowse condition, you'll have to keep your bed in a tidy an' awdahly mannah.

SIMON. Dtch, dtch, dtch, Twenty-seven, it's disgriceful. And as long as you're heah, in the capacity of a patient, please remember I'm not to be addressed as "Susie", but as "Nurse Monican".

SYLVESTER. Twenty-seven, did you tike the pills the doctah awdahed?

VOICE OF SUSIE, *left*. Twenty-six!

SYLVESTER. Yes, Nurse?

VOICE OF SUSIE. Sister says you're to have a bawth at once; and you, Twenty-seven, see about getting it ready for him.

*(A fairly long pause.)*

SYLVESTER *(angrily)*. A bawth: well, be God, that's a good one!

*(Another pause.)*

SYLVESTER *(earnestly, to SIMON)*. You haven't had a dip now for nearly a week, while I had one only the day before yesterday in the late evening: it must have been you she meant, Simon.

SIMON. Oh, there was no dubiety about her bellowing out Twenty-six, Syl.

SYLVESTER *(excitedly)*. How the hell d'ye know, man, she didn't mix the numbers up?

SIMON. Mix the numbers up! How could the woman mix the numbers up?

SYLVESTER. How could the woman mix the numbers up! What could be easier than to say Twenty-six instead of Twenty-seven? How could the woman mix the numbers up! Of course the woman could mix the numbers up.

SIMON. What d'ye expect me to do—hurl myself into a bath that was meant for you?

SYLVESTER. I don't want you to hurl yourself into anything; but you don't expect me to plunge into a bath that maybe wasn't meant for me?

SIMON. Nurse Monican said Twenty-six, and when you can alter that, ring me up and let me know.

*(A pause; then SIMON gets up and goes toward bathroom door.)*

SYLVESTER *(snappily)*. Where are you leppin' to now?

SIMON. I want to get the bath ready.

SYLVESTER. You want to get the bawth ready! Turn the hot cock on, and turn the cold cock on for Number Twenty-six, mixin' them the way a chemist would mix his medicines—sit still, man, till we hear the final verdict.

*(SIMON sits down again. SUSIE comes in left, and, passing to the door leading to grounds, pauses beside SIMON and SYLVESTER.)*

SUSIE *(sharply)*. What are the two of you doing? Didn't I tell you, Twenty-six, that you were to take a bawth; and you, Twenty-seven, that you were to get it ready for him?

SYLVESTER *(sitting brightly up in bed)*. Oh,

just goin' to spring up, Nurse Monican, when you popped in.

SUSIE. Well, up with you, then, and take it.  
(To SIMON) You go and get it ready for him.

(SIMON goes into the bathroom.)

SYLVESTER (*venturing a last hope as SUSIE goes towards the entrance to grounds*). I had a dip, Nurse, only the day before yesterday in the late evening.

SUSIE (*as she goes out*). Have another one now, please.

(*The water can be heard flowing in the bathroom, and a light cloud of steam comes out by the door which SIMON has left open.*)

SYLVESTER (*mimicking SUSIE*). Have another one, now, please! One to be taken before and after meals. The delicate audacity of the lip of that one since she draped her shoulders with a crimson cape!

(SIMON appears and stands leaning against the side of the bathroom door.)

SIMON (*gloating*). She's steaming away now, Sylvester, full cock.

SYLVESTER (*scornfully, to SIMON*). Music to you, the gurgling of the thing, music to you. Gaugin' the temperature for me. Dtch, dtch, dtch (*sitting up*), an hospital's the last place that



# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

God made. Be damn it, I wouldn't let a stuffed bird stay in one!

SIMON. Come on, man, before the hot strength bubbles out of it.

SYLVESTER (*getting out of bed*). Have you the towels an' everything ready for me to spring into?

SIMON (*with a bow*). Everything's ready for your enjoyment, Sir.

SYLVESTER (*as he goes towards the bathroom*). Can't they be content with an honest to God cleanliness, an' not be tryin' to gild a man with soap and water.

SIMON (*with a grin, as SYLVESTER passes*). Can I do anything more for you, Sir?

SYLVESTER (*almost inarticulate with indignation, as he goes in*). Now I'm tellin' you, Simon Norton, our cordiality's gettin' a little strained!

(HARRY *wheels himself in, goes again to the fire-place, and looks into grounds*. SIMON *watches him for a moment, takes a package of cigarettes from his pocket and lights one.*)

SIMON (*awkwardly, to HARRY*). Have a fag, Harry, oul' son?

HARRY. Don't want one; tons of my own in the locker.

SIMON. Like me to get you one?

HARRY. I can get them myself if I want one. D'ye think my arms are lifeless as well as my legs?

SIMON. Far from that. Everybody's remarking what a great improvement has taken place in you during the last few days.

HARRY. Everybody but myself.

SIMON. What with the rubbing every morning and the rubbing every night, and now the operation to-morrow as a grand finally, you'll maybe be in the centre of the football field before many months are out.

HARRY (*irritably*). Oh, shut up, man! It's a miracle I want—not an operation. The last operation was to give life to my limbs, but no life came, and again I felt the horrible sickness of life only from the waist up. (*Raising his voice*) Don't stand there gaping at me, man. Did you never before clap your eyes on a body dead from the belly down? Blast you, man, why don't you shout at me, "While there's life there's hope!"

(SIMON *edges away to his corner*. SUSIE *comes in by the glass door and goes over to the table.*)

HARRY (*to SUSIE*). A package of fags. Out of the locker. Will you, Susie?

(SUSIE *goes to HARRY's locker, gets the*

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*cigarettes and gives them to him. As he lights the cigarette, his right arm gives a sudden jerk.)*

SUSIE. Steady. What's this?

HARRY (*with a nervous laugh*). Barred from my legs it's flowing back into my arms. I can feel it slyly creeping into my fingers.

VOICE OF PATIENT, *out left* (*plaintively*). Nurse!

SUSIE (*turning her head in direction of the voice*). Hsush, you Twenty-three; go asleep, go asleep.

HARRY. A soft, velvety sense of distance between my fingers and the things I touch.

SUSIE. Stop thinking of it. Brooding checks the chance of your recovery. A good deal may be imagination.

HARRY (*peevishly*). Oh, I know the different touches of iron (*he touches the bed rail*); of wood (*he touches the chair*); of flesh (*he touches his cheek*); and to my fingers they're giving the same answers—a feeling of numb distance between me and the touches of them all.

VOICE OF PATIENT, *out left*. Nurse!

SUSIE. Dtch, dtch. Go asleep, Twenty-three.

VOICE, *out left*. The stab in the head is worse than ever, Nurse.

SUSIE. You've got your dose of morphia, and you'll get no more. You'll just have to stick it.

(RESIDENT SURGEON FORBY MAXWELL enters from the grounds. He is about thirty years of age, and good-looking. His white overalls are unbuttoned, showing war ribbons on his waistcoat, flanked by the ribbon of the D.S.O. He has a careless, jaunty air, and evidently takes a decided interest in SUSIE. He comes in singing softly.)

SURGEON MAXWELL:

Stretched on the couch, Jessie fondled her dress,  
That hid all her beauties just over the knee;  
And I wondered and said, as I sigh'd, "What  
a shame,  
That there's no room at all on the couch there  
for me."

SUSIE (to SURGEON MAXWELL). Twenty-three's at it again.

SURGEON MAXWELL. Uh, hopeless case. Half his head in Flanders. May go on like that for another month.

SUSIE. He keeps the patients awake at night.

SIMON. With his "God have mercys on me", running after every third or fourth tick of the clock.

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

HARRY. 'Tisn't fair to me, 'tisin't fair to me;  
I must get my bellyful of sleep if I'm ever going  
to get well.

SURGEON MAXWELL. Oh, the poor devil won't  
trouble any of you much longer. (*Singing*):  
Said Jess, with a light in the side of her eyes,  
A shrewd, mathematical fellow like you,  
With an effort of thought should be able to  
make

The couch wide enough for the measure of  
two.

SUSIE. Dtch, dtch, Surgeon Maxwell.

SURGEON MAXWELL (*singing*):  
I fixed on a plan, and I carried it through,  
And the eyes of Jess gleam'd as she whisper'd  
to me:

"The couch, made for one, that was made to  
hold two,

Has, maybe, been made big enough to hold  
three!"

(SURGEON MAXWELL catches SUSIE's hand  
in his. SYLVESTER bursts in from the  
bathroom, and rushes to his bed, colliding  
with the Surgeon as he passes him.)

SURGEON MAXWELL. Hallo, hallo, there,  
what's this?

SYLVESTER (*flinging himself into bed, covering  
himself rapidly with the clothes, blowing himself*

warm). Pooh, pooh, I feel as if I was sittin' on the doorstep of pneumonia! Poo, oh!

SURGEON MAXWELL (*to SYLVESTER*). We'll have a look at you in a moment, Twenty-six, and see what's wrong with you.

(*SYLVESTER subsides down into the bed, and SIMON edges towards the entrance to grounds, and stands looking into grounds, or watching SURGEON MAXWELL examining SYLVESTER.*)

SURGEON MAXWELL (*to HARRY, who is looking intently out into the grounds*). Well, how are we to-day, Heegan?

HARRY. I imagine I don't feel quite so dead in myself as I've felt these last few days back.

SURGEON MAXWELL. Oh, well, that's something.

HARRY. Sometimes I think I feel a faint, fluttering kind of a buzz in the tops of my thighs.

SURGEON MAXWELL (*touching HARRY's thigh*). Where, here?

HARRY. No; higher up, doctor; just where the line is that leaves the one part living and the other part dead.

SURGEON MAXWELL. A buzz?

HARRY. A timid, faint, fluttering kind of a buzz.

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

SURGEON MAXWELL. That's good. There might be a lot in that faint, fluttering kind of a buzz.

HARRY (*after a pause*). I'm looking forward to the operation to-morrow.

SURGEON MAXWELL. That's the way to take it. While there's life there's hope (*with a grin and a wink at SUSIE*). And now we'll have a look at Twenty-six.

(HARRY *wheels himself out left; half-way out he turns his head and stretches to look out into the grounds, then he goes on.*)

SUSIE. Will the operation to-morrow be successful?

SURGEON MAXWELL. Oh, of course; very successful.

SUSIE. Do him any good, d'ye think?

SURGEON MAXWELL. Oh, blast the good it'll do him.

(SUSIE *goes over to SYLVESTER in the bed.*)

SUSIE (*to SYLVESTER*). Sit up, Twenty-six, Surgeon Maxwell wants to examine you.

SYLVESTER (*sitting up with a brave effort but a woeful smile*). Righto. In the pink!

(SURGEON MAXWELL *comes over, twirling his stethoscope. SIMON peeps round the corner of the glass door.*)

SUSIE (*to* SURGEON MAXWELL). What was the cause of the row between the matron and Nurse Jennings? (*To* SYLVESTER) Open your shirt, Twenty-six.

SURGEON MAXWELL (*who has fixed the stethoscope in his ears, removing them to speak to* SUSIE). Caught doing the tango in the Resident's arms in the Resident's room. Naughty girl, naughty girl. (*To* SYLVESTER) Say "ninety-nine".

SYLVESTER. Ninety-nine.

SUSIE. Oh, I knew something like that would happen. Daughter of a Dean, too.

SURGEON MAXWELL (*to* SYLVESTER). Say "ninety-nine".

SYLVESTER. Ninety - nine. U - u - uh, it's gettin' very cold here, sitting up!

SURGEON MAXWELL (*to* SYLVESTER). Again. Don't be frightened; breathe quietly.

SYLVESTER. Ninety - nine. Cool as a cucumber, Doctor. Ninety-nine.

SURGEON MAXWELL (*to* SUSIE). Damn pretty little piece. Not so pretty as you, though.

SYLVESTER (*to* SURGEON MAXWELL). Yesterday Doctor Joyce, givin' me a run over, said to a couple of medical men that were with him lookin' for tips, that the thing was apparently yieldin' to treatment, and that an operation wouldn't be necessary.



## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

SURGEON MAXWELL. Go on; ninety-nine, ninety-nine.

SYLVESTER. Ninety-nine, ninety-nine.

SURGEON MAXWELL (*to SUSIE*). Kicks higher than her head, and you should see her doing the splits.

SYLVESTER (*to SURGEON MAXWELL*). Any way of gettin' rid of it'll do for me, for I'm not one of them that'll spend a night before an operation in a crowd of prayers.

SUSIE. Not very useful things to be doing and poor patients awaiting attention.

SURGEON MAXWELL (*putting stethoscope into pocket*). He'll do alright; quite fit. Great old skin. (*To SYLVESTER*) You can cover yourself up, now. (*To SUSIE*) And don't tell me, Nurse Susie, that you've never felt a thrill or left a bedside for a kiss in a corner. (*He tickles her under the arm.*) Kiss in a corner, Nurse!

SUSIE (*pleased, but coy*). Please don't, Doctor Maxwell, please.

SURGEON MAXWELL (*tickling her again as they go out*). Kiss in a corner; ta-ra-ra-ra, kiss in a corner!

(*A pause.*)

SYLVESTER (*to SIMON*). Simon, were you listenin' to that conversation?

SIMON. Indeed I was.

SYLVESTER. We have our hands full, Simon, to keep alive. Think of sinkin' your body to the level of a hand that, ta-ra-ra-ra, would plunge a knife into your middle, haphazard, hurryin' up to run away after a thrill from a kiss in a corner. Did you see me dizzied an' wastin' me time pumpin' ninety-nines out of me, unrecognised, quiverin' with cold an' equivocation!

SIMON. Everybody says he's a very clever fellow with the knife.

SYLVESTER. He'd gouge out your eye, saw off your arm, lift a load of vitals out of your middle, rub his hands, keep down a terrible desire to cheer lookin' at the ruin, an' say, "Twenty-six, when you're a little better, you'll feel a new man!"

(MRS. HEEGAN, MRS. FORAN *and* TEDDY enter from the grounds. MRS. FORAN is leading TEDDY, who has a heavy bandage over his eyes, and is dressed in the blue clothes of military hospitals.)

MRS. FORAN (to TEDDY). Just a little step here, Ted; upsh! That's it; now we're on the earth again, beside Simon and Sylvester. You'd better sit here. (*She puts him sitting on a chair.*)

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

SYLVESTER (*to MRS. HEEGAN, as she kisses him*).  
Well, how's the old woman, eh?

MRS. HEEGAN. A little anxious about poor Harry.

SIMON. He'll be alright. To-morrow'll tell a tale.

SUSIE (*coming in, annoyed*). Who let you up here at this hour? Twenty-eight's to have an operation to-morrow, and shouldn't be disturbed.

MRS. HEEGAN. Sister Peter Alcantara said we might come up, Nurse.

MRS. FORAN (*loftily*). Sister Peter Alcantara's authority ought to be good enough, I think.

MRS. HEEGAN. Sister Peter Alcantara said a visit might buck him up a bit.

MRS. FORAN. Sister Peter Alcantara knows the responsibility she'd incur by keepin' a wife from her husband and a mother from her son.

SUSIE. Sister Peter Alcantara hasn't got to nurse him. And remember, nothing is to be said that would make his habit of introspection worse than it is.

MRS. FORAN (*with dignity*). Thanks for the warnin', Nurse, but them kind of mistakes is unusual with us.

(SUSIE goes out left, as HARRY wheels him-

*self rapidly in. Seeing the group he stops suddenly, and a look of disappointment comes on to his face.)*

MRS. HEEGAN (*kissing HARRY*). How are you, son?

MRS. FORAN. I brought Teddy, your brother in arms, up to see you, Harry.

HARRY (*impatiently*). Where's Jessie? I thought you were to bring her with you?

MRS. HEEGAN. She's comin' after us in a moment.

HARRY. Why isn't she here now.

MRS. FORAN. She stopped to have a word in the grounds with someone she knew.

HARRY. It was Barney Bagnal, was it? Was it Barney Bagnal?

TEDDY. Maybe she wanted to talk to him about gettin' the V.C.

HARRY. What V.C.? Who's gettin' the V.C.?

TEDDY. Barney. Did he not tell you? (MRS. FORAN *prods his knee*.) What's up?

HARRY (*intensely, to TEDDY*). What's he gettin' it for? What's he gettin' the V.C. for?

TEDDY. For carryin' you wounded out of the line of fire. (MRS. FORAN *prods his knee*.) What's up?

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

HARRY (*in anguish*). Christ Almighty, for carryin' me wounded out of the line of fire!

MRS. HEEGAN (*rapidly*). Harry, I wouldn't be thinkin' of anything till we see what the operation'll do to-morrow.

SIMON (*rapidly*). God, if it gave him back the use even of one of his legs.

MRS. FORAN (*rapidly*). Look at all the places he could toddle to, an' all the things he could do then with the prop of a crutch.

MRS. HEEGAN. Even at the worst, he'll never be dependin' on anyone, for he's bound to get the maximum allowance.

SIMON. Two quid a week, isn't it?

SYLVESTER. Yes, a hundred per cent total incapacitation.

HARRY. She won't come up if one of you don't go down and bring her up.

MRS. HEEGAN. She's bound to come up, for she's got your ukelele.

HARRY. Call her up, Simon, call her up—I must see Jessie.

(SIMON goes over to the door leading to the grounds and looks out.)

MRS. FORAN (*bending over till her face is close to HARRY's*). The drawn look on his face isn't half as bad as when I seen him last.

MRS. HEEGAN (*bending and looking into*

HARRY's *face*). Look, the hollows under his eyes is fillin' up, too.

TEDDY. I'm afraid he'll have to put Jessie out of his head, for when a man's hit in the spine . . . (MRS. FORAN *prods his knee*.) What's up, woman?

HARRY (*impatiently, to SIMON*). Is she coming? Can you see her anywhere?

SIMON. I see someone like her in the distance under the trees.

HARRY. Call her; can't you give her a shout, man?

SIMON (*calling*). Jessie. Is that you, Jessie! Jessie-e!

MRS. HEEGAN (*to HARRY*). What time are you goin' under the operation?

HARRY (*to SIMON*). Call her again, call her again, can't you!

SIMON (*calling*). Jessie; Jessie-e!

TEDDY. Not much of a chance for an injury to the spine, for . . .

MRS. FORAN (*putting her face close to TEDDY's*). Oh, shut up, you!

HARRY. Why did you leave her in the grounds? Why didn't you wait till she came up with you?

MRS. FORAN (*going over to SIMON and calling*). Jessie, Jessie-e!

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

JESSIE'S VOICE, *in distance*. Yehess!

MRS. FORAN (*calling*). Come up here at once; we're all waitin' for you!

JESSIE'S VOICE. I'm not going up!

MRS. FORAN (*calling*). Bring up that ukelele here at once, miss!

JESSIE'S VOICE. Barney'll bring it up!

(HARRY, *who has been listening intently, wheels himself rapidly to where SIMON and MRS. FORAN are, pushing through them hurriedly.*)

HARRY (*calling loudly*). Jessie! Jessie! Jessie-e!

MRS. FORAN. Look at that, now; she's runnin' away, the young rip!

HARRY (*appealingly*). Jessie, Jessie-e!

(SUSIE *enters quickly from left. She goes over to HARRY and pulls HARRY back from the door.*)

SUSIE (*indignantly*). Disgraceful! Rousing the whole ward with this commotion! Dear, dear, dear, look at the state of Twenty-eight. Come along, come along, please; you must all go at once.

HARRY. Jessie's coming up, for a minute, Nurse.

SUSIE. No more to come up. We've had enough for one night, and you for a serious

operation to-morrow. Come on, all out, please.

(SUSIE *conducts* MRS. HEEGAN, MRS. FORAN *and* TEDDY *out left*.)

MRS. FORAN (*going out*). We're goin', we're goin', thank you. A nice way to treat the flotsum and jetsum of the battlefields!

SUSIE (*to* HARRY). To bed now, Twenty-eight, please. (*To* SIMON) Help me get him to bed, Twenty-seven.

(SUSIE *pushes* HARRY *to his bed, right*; SIMON *brings portion of a bed-screen which he places around* HARRY, *hiding him from view*.)

SUSIE (*turning to speak to* SYLVESTER, *who is sitting up in bed, as she arranges screen*). You're going to have your little operation in the morning, so you'd better go to sleep too.

(SYLVESTER *goes pale and a look of dismay and fear crawls over his face*.)

SUSIE. Don't funk it now. They're not going to turn you inside out. It'll be over in ten minutes.

SYLVESTER (*with a groan*). When they once get you down your only hope is in the infinite mercy of God!

(SYLVESTER *slides down till he lies prone and motionless on the bed*. HARRY *is*



## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*in bed now. SIMON removes the screen, and SUSIE arranges HARRY's quilt for the night.)*

SUSIE (*to SIMON*). Now run and help get the things together for supper. (*SIMON goes out left.*) (*Encouragingly to HARRY*) After the operation, a stay in the air of the Convalescent may work wonders.

HARRY. If I could mingle my breath with the breeze that blows from every sea, and over every land, they wouldn't widen me into anything more than the shrivell'd thing I am.

SUSIE (*switching off the two hanging lights, so that the red light over the fire-place alone remains*). Don't be foolish, Twenty-eight. Wheeling yourself about among the beeches and the pines, when the daffodils are hanging out their blossoms, you'll deepen your chance in the courage and renewal of the country.

*(The bell of a Convent in grounds begins to ring for Compline.)*

HARRY (*with intense bitterness*). I'll say to the pine, "Give me the grace and beauty of the beech"; I'll say to the beech, "Give me the strength and stature of the pine". In a net I'll catch butterflies in bunches; twist and mangle them between my fingers, and fix them wriggling on to mercy's banner. I'll make my

chair a Juggernaut, and wheel it over the neck and spine of every daffodil that looks at me, and strew them dead to manifest the mercy of God and the justice of man!

SUSIE (*shocked*). Shush, Harry, Harry!

HARRY. To hell with you, your country, trees and things, you jibbering jay!

SUSIE (*as she is going out*). Twenty-eight!

HARRY (*vehemently*). To hell with you, your country, trees and things, you jibbering jay!

(SUSIE looks at him, pauses for a few moments, as if to speak, and then goes out.)

(A pause; then BARNEY comes in by door from grounds. An overcoat covers his military hospital uniform of blue. His left arm is in a sling. Under his right arm he carries a ukelele, and in his hand he has a bunch of flowers. Embarrassed, he goes slowly to HARRY's bed, drops the flowers at the foot, then he drops the ukelele there.)

BARNEY (*awkwardly*). Your ukelele. An' a bunch of flowers from Jessie.

(HARRY remains motionless on the bed.)

BARNEY. A bunch of flowers from Jessie, and your ukelele.

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*(The SISTER of the Ward enters, left, going to the chapel for Compline. She wears a cream habit with a white coif; a large set of Rosary beads and a brass Crucifix hangs from her girdle. She pauses on her way.)*

SISTER *(to HARRY)*. Keeping brave and hopeful, Twenty-eight?

HARRY *(softly)*. Yes, Sister.

SISTER. Splendid. And we've got a ukelele too. Can you play it, my child?

HARRY. Yes, Sister.

SISTER. Splendid. You must play me something when you're well over the operation. *(To BARNEY)* Standing guard over your comrade, Twenty-two, eh?

BARNEY *(softly and shyly)*. Yes, Sister.

SISTER. Grand. Forasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto me. Well, God be with you both, my children. *(To HARRY)* And Twenty-eight, pray to God, for wonderful He is in His doing toward the children of men.

*(Calm and dignified she goes out into the grounds.)*

BARNEY *(pausing as he goes out left)*. They're on the bed; the ukelele, and the bunch of flowers from Jessie.

(*The SISTERS are heard singing in the  
Convent the hymn of Salve Regina.*)

SISTERS:

Salve Regina, mater misericordiae;  
Vitae dulcedo et spes nostra, salve!  
Ad te clamamus, exules filii Hevae;  
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac  
lacrymarum valle.

Eia ergo Advocata nostra,  
Illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte,  
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui—

HARRY. God of the miracles, give a poor  
devil a chance, give a poor devil a chance!

SISTERS (*singing*):

Nobis post hoc exsilium ostende,  
O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria!



## ACT IV

SCENE: *A room off the dance hall of the Avondale Football Club. At back, left, cutting corners of the back and side walls, is the arched entrance, divided by a slim pillar, to the dance hall. This entrance is hung with crimson and yellow striped curtains; whenever these are parted the dancers can be seen swinging or gliding past the entrance if a dance be taking place at the time. Over the entrance is a scroll on which is printed: "Up the Avondales!" The wall back has a wide, tall window which opens to the garden, in which the shrubs and some sycamore trees can be seen. It is hung with apple-green casement curtains, which are pulled to the side to allow the window to be open as it is at present. Between the entrance to hall and the window is a Roll of Honour containing the names of five members of the Club killed in the war. Underneath the Roll of Honour a wreath of*

*laurel tied with red and yellow ribbon. To the front left is the fireplace. Between the fireplace and the hall entrance is a door on which is an oval white enamel disc with "Care-taker" painted on it. To the right a long table, covered with a green cloth, on which are numerous bottles of wine and a dozen glasses. On the table, too, is a telephone. A brown carpet covers the floor. Two easy and one ordinary chairs are in the room. Hanging from the ceiling are three lanterns; the centre one is four times the length of its width, the ones at the sides are less than half as long as the centre lantern and hang horizontally; the lanterns are black, with a broad red stripe running down the centre of the largest and across those hanging at each side, so that, when they are lighted, they suggest an illuminated black cross with an inner one of gleaming red. The hall is vividly decorated with many coloured lanterns, looped with coloured streamers.*

*When the scene is revealed the curtains are drawn, and the band can be heard playing a fox-trot. Outside in the garden near the window SIMON and SYLVESTER can be seen smoking, and TEDDY is walking slowly up and down the path. The band is heard playing*

*for a few moments, then the curtains are pulled aside, and JESSIE, with BARNEY holding her hand, comes in and walks rapidly to the table where the wine is standing. They are quickly followed by HARRY, who wheels himself a little forward, then stops, watching them. The curtains part again, and MRS. HEEGAN is seen watching HARRY. SIMON and SYLVESTER, outside, watch those in the room through the window. BARNEY wears a neat navy-blue suit, with a rather high, stiff collar and black tie. Pinned on the breast of his waistcoat are his war medals, flanked by the Victoria Cross. HARRY is also wearing his medals. JESSIE has on a very pretty, rather tight-fitting dance frock, with the sleeves falling widely to the elbow and cut fairly low on her breast. All the dancers, and HARRY too, wear coloured, fantastically shaped paper hats.*

JESSIE (*hot, excited and uneasy, as with a rapid glance back she sees the curtains parted by HARRY*). Here he comes prowling after us again! His watching of us is pulling all the enjoyment out of the night. It makes me shiver to feel him wheeling after us.

BARNEY. We'll watch for a chance to shake

him off, an' if he starts again we'll make him take his tangled body somewhere else.

*(As HARRY moves forward from the curtained entrance.)*

Shush! he's comin' near us. *(In a louder tone to JESSIE)* Red wine, Jessie, for you, or white wine?

HARRY. Red wine first, Jessie, to the passion and the power and the pain of life, an' then a drink of white wine to the melody that is in them all!

JESSIE. I'm so hot.

HARRY. I'm so cold; white wine for the woman warm to make her cold; red wine for the man that's cold to make him warm!

JESSIE. White wine for me.

HARRY. For me the red wine till I drink to men puffed up with pride of strength, for even creeping things can praise the Lord!

BARNEY *(gently to HARRY, as he gives a glass of wine to JESSIE)*. No more for you now, Harry.

HARRY *(mockingly)*. Oh, please, your lusty lordship, just another, an' if I seek a second, smack me well. *(Wheeling his chair viciously against BARNEY)* Get out, you trimm'd-up clod. There's medals on my breast as well as yours! *(He fills a glass.)*

JESSIE. Let us go back to the dancing,



# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

Barney. (BARNEY *hesitates*.) Please, Barney, let us go back to the dancing!

HARRY. To the dancing, for the day cometh when no man can play. And legs were made to dance, to run, to jump, to carry you from one place to another; but mine can neither walk, nor run, nor jump, nor feel the merry motion of a dance. But stretch me on the floor fair on my belly, and I will turn over on my back; then wriggle back again on to my belly, and that's more than a dead, dead man can do!

BARNEY. Jessie wants to dance, an' so we'll go, and leave you here a little.

HARRY. Cram pain with pain and pleasure cram with pleasure. I'm going too. You'd cage me in from seeing you dance, and dance, and dance, with Jessie close to you, and you so close to Jessie. Though you wouldn't think it, yes, I have. I've hammer'd out many a merry measure upon a polish'd floor with a sweet, sweet heifer. (*As BARNEY and JESSIE are moving away he catches hold of JESSIE's dress*) Her name? Oh, any name will do—we'll call her Jessie!

JESSIE. Oh, let me go. (*To BARNEY*) Barney, make him let me go, please.

(*BARNEY, without a word, removes HARRY's hand from JESSIE's dress. JESSIE and*

BARNEY then go out to the dance hall through the curtained entrance. After a while MRS. HEEGAN slips away from the entrance into the hall. After a moment's pause HARRY follows them into the hall. SIMON and SYLVESTER come in from the garden, leaving TEDDY still outside smoking and walking to and fro in the cautious manner of the blind. SIMON and SYLVESTER sit down near the fire and puff away in silence for a few moments.)

SYLVESTER (*earnestly*). I knew it. I knew it, Simon—strainin', an' strainin' his nerves; driftin', an' driftin' towards an hallucination!

SIMON. Jessie might try to let him down a little more gently, but it would have been better, I think, if Harry hadn't come here to-night.

SYLVESTER. I concur in that, Simon. What's a decoration to an hospital is an anxiety here.

SIMON. To carry life and colour to where there's nothing but the sick and helpless is right; but to carry the sick and helpless to where there's nothing but life and colour is wrong. *(The telephone bell rings.)*

SYLVESTER. There's the telephone bell ringing.

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

SIMON. Oh, someone'll come in and answer it in a second.

SYLVESTER. To join a little strength to a lot of weakness is what I call sensible; but to join a little weakness to a lot of strength is what I call a . . .

SIMON. A cod.

SYLVESTER. Exactly.

*(The telephone continues to ring.)*

SYLVESTER. There's that telephone ringin' still.

SIMON. Oh, someone'll come in and answer it in a second.

*(TEDDY has groped his way to French window.)*

TEDDY. The telephone's tinklin', boys.

SYLVESTER. Thanks, Teddy. We hear it, thanks. *(To SIMON)* When he got the invitation from the Committay to come, wearin' his decorations, me an' the old woman tried to persuade him that, seein' his condition, it was better to stop at home, an' let me represent him, but *(with a gesture)* no use!

*(TEDDY resumes his walk to and fro.)*

SIMON. It was natural he'd want to come, since he was the means of winning the Cup twice before for them, leading up to their keeping the trophy for ever by the win of a year ago.

SYLVESTER. To bring a boy so helpless as him, whose memory of agility an' strength time hasn't flattened down, to a place wavin' with joy an' dancin' is simply, simply——

SIMON. Devastating, I'd say.

SYLVESTER. Of course it is! Is that god-damn telephone goin' to keep ringin' all night?

(MRS. FORAN *enters from hall quickly.*)

MRS. FORAN. Miss Monican says that one of you is to answer the telephone, an' call her if it's anything important.

SYLVESTER (*nervously*). I never handled a telephone in my life.

SIMON. I chanced it once and got so hot and quivery that I couldn't hear a word, and didn't know what I was saying myself.

MRS. FORAN. Have a shot at it and see.

(*The three of them drift over to the telephone.*)

SYLVESTER. Chance it again, Simon, an' try to keep steady.

(*As SIMON stretches his hand to the receiver.*)

SYLVESTER. Don't rush, don't rush, man, an' make a mess of it.

SIMON (*pointing to receiver*). When you lift this down, you're connected, I think.

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

SYLVESTER. No use of thinkin' on this job. Don't you turn the handle first?

SIMON (*irritably*). No, you don't turn no handle, man!

MRS. FORAN. Let Simon do it now; Simon knows.

(SIMON *tremblingly lifts down the receiver, almost letting it fall.*)

SYLVESTER. Woa, woa, Simon; careful, careful!

SIMON (*speaking in receiver*). Eh, hallo! Eh, listen there. Eh, hallo! listen.

SYLVESTER. You listen, man, an' give the fellow at the other end a chance to speak.

SIMON. If you want me to manipulate the thing, let me manipulate it in tranquillity.

MRS. FORAN (*to SYLVESTER*). Oh, don't be puttin' him out, Sylvester.

SIMON (*waving them back*). Don't be crushing in on me; give me room to manipulate the thing.

(*Dead silence for some moments.*)

MRS. FORAN. Are you hearin' anything from the other end?

SIMON. A kind of a buzzing and a roaring noise.

(SYLVESTER *suddenly gives the cord a jerk and pulls the receiver out of SIMON'S hand.*)

(*Angrily*) What the hell are you trying to do, man? You're after pulling it right out of my mit.

SYLVESTER (*heatedly*). There was a knot or a twist an' a tangle in it that was keepin' the sound from travellin'.

SIMON. If you want me to work the thing properly, you'll have to keep yourself from interfering. (*Resuming surlily*) Eh, hallo, listen, yes? Ha! ha! ha! ha! Yes, yes, yes. No, no, no. Cheerio! Yes. Eh, hallo, listen, eh. Hallo!

SYLVESTER. What is it? What're they sayin'?

SIMON (*hopelessly, taking the receiver from his ear*). I don't seem to be able to hear a damn sound.

SYLVESTER. An' Holy God, what are you yessin' and noin' and cheerioin' out of you for then?

SIMON. You couldn't stand here like a fool and say nothing, could you?

SYLVESTER. Show it to me, Simon, show it to me—you're not holdin' it at the proper angle.

MRS. FORAN. Give it to Syl, Simon; it's a delicate contrivance that needs a knack in handlin'.

SYLVESTER (*as he is taking the receiver from*

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

SIMON *and carefully placing it to his ear*). You have always to preserve an eqwee-balance between the speakin' mouth and the hearin' ear. (*Speaking into receiver*) Hallo! Anybody there at the other end of this? Eh, wha's that? Yes, yes, I've got you (*taking the receiver from his ear and speaking to* SIMON *and* MRS. FORAN). Something like wine, or dine, or shine, or something—an' a thing that's hummin'.

SIMON. I can see no magnificent meaning jumping out of that!

MRS. FORAN. They couldn't be talkin' about bees, could they?

SYLVESTER (*scornfully*). Bees! No, they couldn't be talkin' about bees! That kind of talk, Mrs. Foran, only tends to confuse matters. Bees! Dtch, dtch, dtch—the stupidity of some persons is . . . terrifyin'!

SIMON. Ask them quietly what they want.

SYLVESTER (*indignantly*). What the hell's the use of askin' them that when I can hear something only like a thing that's hummin'?

MRS. FORAN. It wouldn't be, now, comin', or even bummin'?

SYLVESTER. It might even possibly be drummin'. Personally, Mrs. Foran, I think, since you can't help, you might try to keep from hinderin'.

SIMON. Put it back, Syl, where it was, an' if it rings again, we'll only have to slip quietly out of this.

MRS. FORAN. Yes, put it back, an' say it never rang.

SYLVESTER. Where was it? Where do I put it back?

SIMON. On that thing stickin' out there. Nice and gently now.

*(SYLVESTER cautiously puts receiver back.*

*They look at the telephone for a few moments, then go back to the fire, one by one. SYLVESTER stands with his back to it; SIMON sits in a chair, over the back of which MRS. FORAN leans.)*

MRS. FORAN. Curious those at the other end of the telephone couldn't make themselves understood.

SIMON. Likely they're not accustomed to it, and it's a bit difficult if you're not fully conscious of its manipulation.

SYLVESTER. Well, let them study an' study it then, or abide by the consequences, for we can't be wastin' time teachin' them.

*(The curtains at entrance of dance hall are pulled aside, and TEDDY, who has disappeared from the garden a little time before, comes in. As he leaves*



*the curtains apart, the dancers can be seen gliding past the entrance in the movements of a tango. TEDDY comes down, looks steadily but vacantly towards the group around the fire, then goes over carefully to the table, where he moves his hand about till it touches a bottle, which he takes up in one hand, feeling it questioningly with the other.)*

SIMON. How goes it, Teddy?

TEDDY (*with a vacant look towards them*).  
Sylvester—Simon—well. What seest thou, Teddy? Thou seest not as man seeth. In the garden the trees stand up; the green things showeth themselves and fling out flowers of divers hues. In the sky the sun by day and the moon and the stars by night—nothing. In the hall the sound of dancing, the eyes of women, grey and blue and brown and black, do sparkle and dim and sparkle again. Their white breasts rise and fall, and rise again. Slender legs, from red and black, and white and green, come out, go in again—nothing. Strain as you may, it stretches from the throne of God to the end of the hearth of hell.

SIMON. What?

TEDDY. The darkness.

SIMON (*knowing not what to say*). Yes, oh yes.

TEDDY (*holding up a bottle of wine*). What colour, Syl? It's all the same, but I like the red the best.

MRS. FORAN (*going over to TEDDY*). Just one glass, dear, and you'll sit down quietly an' take it in sips.

(MRS. FORAN *fills a glass of wine for TEDDY, leads him to a chair, puts him sitting down, and gives the glass of wine carefully to him. The band in the hall has been playing, and through the parted curtain the dancers are seen gliding past. JESSIE moves by now in the arms of BARNEY, and in a few moments is followed along the side of the hall by HARRY wheeling himself in his chair and watching them. MRS. FORAN and the two men look on and become more attentive when among the dancers SUSIE, in the arms of SURGEON MAXWELL, JESSIE, partnered with BARNEY, and HARRY move past.*)

SYLVESTER (*as SUSIE goes by*). Susie Monican's lookin' game enough to-night for anything.

SIMON. Hardly remindful of her one-time fear of God.

SYLVESTER (*as JESSIE goes by followed by HARRY*). There he goes, still followin' them.

# THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

SIMON. And Jessie's looking as if she was tired of her maidenhood, too.

MRS. FORAN. The thin threads holdin' her dress up sidelin' down over her shoulders, an' her catchin' them up again at the tail end of the second before it was too late.

SIMON (*grinning*). And Barney's hand inching up, inching up to pull them a little lower when they're sliding down.

MRS. FORAN. Astonishin' the way girls are advertisin' their immodesty now. Whenever one of them sits down, in my heart I pity the poor men havin' to view the disedifyin' sight of the full length of one leg couched over another.

TEDDY (*forgetful*). A damn nice sight, all the same, I think.

MRS. FORAN (*indignantly*). One would imagine such a thought would jar a man's mind that had kissed good-bye to the sight of his eyes.

TEDDY. Oh, don't be tickin' off every word I say!

MRS. FORAN (*after an astonished pause, whipping the glass out of TEDDY's hand*). Damn the drop more, now, you'll get for the rest of the evenin'.

*(The band suddenly stops playing, and the couples seen just then through the doorway stop dancing and look attentively*

*up the hall. After a slight pause, HARRY in his chair, pushed by SUSIE, comes in through the entrance; his face is pale and drawn, his breath comes in quick faint gasps, and his head is leaning sideways on the back of the chair. MRS. HEEGAN is on one side of HARRY, and SURGEON MAXWELL, who is in dinner-jacket style of evening dress, wearing his medals, including the D.S.O., walks on the other. HARRY is wheeled over near the open window. BARNEY and JESSIE, standing in the entrance, look on and listen.)*

MAXWELL. Here near the window. (*To MRS. HEEGAN*) He'll be all right, Mrs. Heegan, in a second; a little faint—too much excitement. When he recovers a little, I'd get him home.

HARRY (*faintly but doggedly*). Napoo home, napoo. Not yet. I'm all right. I'll spend a little time longer in the belly of an hour bulgin' out with merriment. Carry on.

MAXWELL. Better for you to go home, Heegan.

HARRY. When they drink to the Club from the Cup—the Silver Tassie—that I won three times, three times for them—that first was filled to wet the lips of Jessie and of me—I'll

go, but not yet. I'm all right; my name is yet only a shadow on the Roll of Honour.

MRS. HEEGAN. Come home, Harry; you're gettin' your allowance only on the understandin' that you take care of yourself.

HARRY. Get the Cup. I'll mind it here till you're ready to send it round to drink to the Avondales—on the table here beside me. Bring the Cup; I'll mind it here on the table beside me.

MAXWELL. Get the Cup for him, someone.

(SIMON goes to hall and returns with the Cup, which he gives to HARRY.)

HARRY (*holding the Cup out*). A first drink again for me, for me alone this time, for the shell that hit me bursts forever between Jessie and me. (*To SIMON*) Go on, man, fill out the wine!

MAXWELL (*to SIMON*). A little—just a glass. Won't do him any harm. (*To HARRY*) Then you'll have to remain perfectly quiet, Heegan.

HARRY. The wine—fill out the wine!

SIMON (*to HARRY*). Red wine or white?

HARRY. Red wine, red like the faint remembrance of the fires in France; red wine like the poppies that spill their petals on the breasts of the dead men. No, white wine, white like the stillness of the millions that have removed their clamours from the crowd of life.

No, red wine; red like the blood that was shed for you and for many for the commission of sin! (*He drinks the wine.*) Steady, Harry, and lift up thine eyes unto the hills. (*Roughly to those around him*) What are you all gaping at?

MAXWELL. Now, now, Heegan—you must try to keep quiet.

SUSIE. And when you've rested and feel better, you will sing for us a Negro Spiritual, and point the melody with the ukelele.

MRS. HEEGAN. Just as he used to do.

SYLVESTER. Behind the trenches.

SIMON. In the Rest Camps.

MRS. FORAN. Out in France.

HARRY. Push your sympathy away from me, for I'll have none of it. (*He wheels his chair quickly towards the dance hall.*) Go on with the dancing and keep the ball a-rolling. (*Calling loudly at the entrance*) Trumpets and drum begin! (*The band begins the Tango "Spain".*) Dance and dance and dance. (*He listens for a moment.*) Sink into merriment again, and sling your cares to God! (*Dancers are seen gliding past entrance.*) Dear God, I can't. (*He sinks sideways on his chair.*) I must, must rest. (*He wheels back slowly towards the opposite end of the room, singing to the air of the chorus of "Spain"*):

Let the men with the girls dance again,  
And the girls again dance with the men,  
I'll hurry out of the way;  
To look on at those that can live,  
Asking life to be kindly just when  
Life has no favours to give,  
For a spell here I will stay,  
Then pack up my body and go—  
For mine is a life on the ebb,  
Yours a full life on the flow!

*(HARRY goes over to far side of window and looks out into garden. MRS. HEEGAN is on his right and TEDDY on his left; SIMON and SYLVESTER a little behind looking on. MRS. FORAN to the right of MRS. HEEGAN. SURGEON MAXWELL and SUSIE, who are a little to the front, watch for a moment, then the SURGEON puts his arm round SUSIE and the pair glide off into the dance hall, singing.)*

MAXWELL:

Half hidden here he can peep  
In at the life and the glow,  
Let him sigh, let him curse, let him weep.

SUSIE:

At the men holding fast to the girls,  
And the girls clinging tight to the men,

We gemm'd in joy do not know;  
Gemm'd in joy we do not care.

MAXWELL:

Let him come, let him sigh, let him go,  
For he is a life on the ebb,  
We a full life on the flow.

(SURGEON MAXWELL and SUSIE glide in to the motions of the tango through the entrance into the dance hall, and the curtains are pulled together. A few moments' pause, TEDDY silently puts his hand on HARRY's shoulder, and they both stare into the garden.)

SIMON. The air'll do him good.

SYLVESTER. An' give him breath to sing his song, an' play the ukelele.

MRS. HEEGAN. Just as he used to do.

SYLVESTER. Behind the trenches.

SIMON. In the Rest Camps.

MRS. FORAN. Out in France.

HARRY. I can see, but I cannot dance.

TEDDY. I can dance, but I cannot see.

HARRY. Would that I had the strength to do the things I see.

TEDDY. Would that I could see the things I've strength to do.

HARRY. The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away.



TEDDY. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

MRS. FORAN. I do love the ukelele, especially when it goes tinkle, tinkle, tinkle in the night-time.

SYLVESTER. Bringin' before you glistenin' bodies of blacks, coilin' themselves an' shufflin' an' prancin' in a great jungle dance; shakin' assegais an' spears to the rattle, rattle, rattle, an' thud, thud, thud of the tom-toms.

MRS. FORAN. There's only one possible musical trimmin' to the air of a Negro Spiritual, an' that's the tinkle, tinkle, tinkle of a ukelele.

HARRY. The rising sap in trees I'll never feel.

TEDDY. The hues of branch or leaf I'll never see.

HARRY. There's something wrong with life when men can walk.

TEDDY. There's something wrong with life when men can see.

HARRY. I never felt the hand that made me helpless.

TEDDY. I never saw the hand that made me blind.

HARRY. Life came and took away the half of life.

TEDDY. Life took from me the half he left with you.

HARRY. The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away.

TEDDY. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

*(SUSIE comes quickly in by entrance, goes over to the table and, looking at several bottles of wine, selects one. She is going hurriedly back when, seeing HARRY, she goes over to him.)*

SUSIE *(kindly)*. How are you now, Harry?

HARRY. All right, thank you.

SUSIE. That's good.

*(SUSIE is about to hurry away when MRS. FORAN stops her with a remark.)*

MRS. FORAN *(with a meaning gesture)*. He's takin' it cushy till you're ready to hear him singin' his Negro Spiritual, Miss.

SUSIE. Oh, God, I'd nearly forgotten that. They'll be giving out the balloons at the next dance, and when that fox-trot's over he'll have to come in and sing us the Spiritual.

MRS. HEEGAN. Just as he used to do.

SIMON. Behind the trenches.

SYLVESTER. In the Rest Camps.

MRS. FORAN. Out in France.

SUSIE. As soon as the Balloon Dance is over, Harry, out through the garden and in by the front entrance with you, so that you'll be ready to start as they all sit down. And after the

song, we'll drink to the Club from the Silver Tassie. (*She hurries back to hall with the bottle of wine.*)

MRS. FORAN. I'm longin' to hear Harry on the ukelele.

HARRY. I hope I'll be able to do justice to it.

MRS. HEEGAN. Of course you will, Harry.

HARRY (*nervously*). Before a crowd. Forget a word and it's all up with you.

SIMON. Try it over now, softly; the sound couldn't carry as far as the hall.

SYLVESTER. It'll give you confidence in yourself.

HARRY (*to SIMON*). Show us the ukelele, Simon.

(SIMON gets the ukelele and gives it to HARRY.)

TEDDY. If I knew the ukelele it might wean me a little way from the darkness.

(HARRY pulls a few notes, tuning the ukelele, then he softly sings.)

HARRY:

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home,

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan, what did I see, comin' for to carry me home?

A band of angels comin' after me—comin' for  
to carry me home.

*(A voice in the hall is heard shouting  
through a megaphone.)*

VOICE. Balloons will be given out now!  
Given out now—the balloons!

MRS. FORAN *(excitedly)*. They're goin' to  
send up the balloons! They're goin' to let the  
balloons fly now!

HARRY *(singing)*:

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me  
home.

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me  
home.

MRS. FORAN *(as HARRY is singing)*. Miss  
Monican wants us all to see the flyin' balloons.  
*(She catches TEDDY's arm and runs with him into  
the hall.)*

SIMON. We must all see the flyin' balloons.

MRS. HEEGAN *(running into hall)*. Red bal-  
loons and black balloons.

SIMON *(following MRS. HEEGAN)*. Green bal-  
loons and blue balloons.

SYLVESTER *(following SIMON)*. Yellow bal-  
loons and puce balloons.

*(All troop into the hall, leaving the cur-  
tains apart, and HARRY alone with his  
ukelele. Through the entrance various*

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

*coloured balloons that have been tossed into the air can be seen, mid sounds of merriment and excitement.)*

HARRY (*softly and slowly*). Comin' for to carry me home.

*(He throws the ukelele into an arm-chair, sits still for a moment, then goes to the table, takes up the silver cup and wheels himself into the garden.)*

*(After a pause BARNEY looks in, then enters pulling JESSIE by the hand, letting the curtains fall together again. Then he goes quickly to window, shuts and bolts it, drawing to one half of the curtains, goes back to JESSIE, catches her hand again, and tries to draw her towards room on the left. During the actions that follow the dance goes merrily on in the hall.)*

JESSIE (*holding up a broken shoulder strap and pulling back towards the hall*). Barney, no. God, I'd be afraid he might come in on us alone.

*(Hands part the curtains and throw in coloured streamers that encircle JESSIE and BARNEY.)*

BARNEY. Damn them! . . . He's gone, I tell you, to sing the song an' play the ukelele.

JESSIE (*excited and afraid*). See, they're watching us. No, Barney. You mustn't. I'll not go!

(BARNEY seizes JESSIE in his arms and forces her towards the door on the left.)

You wouldn't be good. I'll not go into that room.

BARNEY. I will be good, I tell you! I just want to be alone with you for a minute.

(BARNEY loosens JESSIE's other shoulder strap, so that her dress leaves her shoulders and bosom bare.)

JESSIE (*near the door left, as BARNEY opens it*). You've loosened my dress—I knew you weren't going to be good. (*As she kisses him passionately*) Barney, Barney—you shouldn't be making me do what I don't want to do!

BARNEY (*holding her and trying to pull her into room*). Come on, Jessie, you needn't be afraid of Barney—we'll just rest a few minutes from the dancing.

(*At that part of the window uncurtained HARRY is seen peering in. He then wheels his chair back and comes on to the centre of the window-frame with a rush, bursting the catch and speeding into the room, coming to a halt, angry and savage, before BARNEY and JESSIE.*)

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT

HARRY. So you'd make merry over my helplessness in front of my face, in front of my face, you pair of cheats! You couldn't wait till I'd gone, so that my eyes wouldn't see the joy I wanted hurrying away from me over to another? Hurt her breast pulling your hand quick out of her bodice, did you? (*To JESSIE*) Saved you in the nick of time, my lady, did I? (*To BARNEY*) Going to enjoy yourself on the same little couch where she, before you formed an image in her eye, acted the part of an amateur wife, and I acted the part of an amateur husband—the black couch with the green and crimson butterflies, in the yellow bushes, where she and me often tired of the things you're dangling after now!

JESSIE. He's a liar, he's a liar, Barney! He often tried it on with coaxing first and temper afterwards, but it always ended in a halt that left him where he started.

HARRY. If I had my hands on your white neck I'd leave marks there that crowds of kisses from your Barney wouldn't moisten away.

BARNEY. You half-baked Lazarus, I've put up with you all the evening, so don't force me now to rough-handle the bit of life the Jerries left you as a souvenir!

HARRY. When I wanted to slip away from life, you brought me back with your whispered "Think of the tears of Jess, think of the tears of Jess", but Jess has wiped away her tears in the ribbon of your Cross, and this poor crippled jest gives a flame of joy to the change; but when you get her, may you find in her the pressed down emptiness of a whore!

BARNEY (*running over and seizing HARRY*). I'll tilt the leaking life out of you, you jealous, peering pimp!

JESSIE (*trying to hold BARNEY back*). Barney, Barney, don't! don't!

HARRY (*appealingly*). Barney, Barney! My heart—you're stopping it!

JESSIE (*running to entrance and shouting in*). Help! help! They're killing each other!

(*In the hall the dance stops. SURGEON MAXWELL runs in, followed by SUSIE, SIMON, SYLVESTER, MRS. FORAN, MRS. HEEGAN and lastly TEDDY finding his way over to the window. Dancers gather around entrance and look on.*)

(SURGEON MAXWELL, *running over, separates BARNEY from HARRY.*)

MAXWELL. What's this? Come, come—we can't have this sort of thing going on.

MRS. HEEGAN. He was throttl'in' him,



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ACT

throttlin' a poor helpless creature, an' if anything happens, he and that painted slug Jessie Taite'll be held accountable!

MAXWELL. This can't be allowed to go on. You'll have to bring him home. Any more excitement would be dangerous.

MRS. HEEGAN. This is what he gets from Jessie Taite for sittin' on the stairs through the yawnin' hours of the night, racin' her off to the play an' the pictures, an' plungin' every penny he could keep from me into presents for the consolidation of the courtship!

MAXWELL. Bring the boy home, woman, bring the boy home.

SYLVESTER (*fiercely to JESSIE*). And money of mine in one of the gewgaws scintillatin' in her hair!

JESSIE. What gewgaw? What gewgaw?

(*Coloured streamers are thrown in by those standing at entrance, which fall on and encircle some of the group around HARRY.*)

SYLVESTER. The tiarara two Christmases ago with the yellow berries, and the three flutterin' crimson swallows!

HARRY (*faintly and bitterly, with a hard little laugh*). Napoo Barney Bagnal and napoo Jessie Taite. A merry heart throbs coldly in my

bosom; a merry heart in a cold bosom—or is it a cold heart in a merry bosom? (*He gathers a number of the coloured streamers and winds them round himself and chair.*) Teddy!

(HARRY catches TEDDY by the sleeve and winds some more streamers round him.)

Sing a song, man, and show the stuff you're made of!

MAXWELL (*catching hold of MRS. HEEGAN'S arm*). Bring him home, woman.

(MAXWELL catches SYLVESTER'S arm.)

Get him home, man.

HARRY. Dear God, this crippled form is still your child. (*To MRS. HEEGAN*) Dear mother, this helpless thing is still your son. Harry Heegan, me, who, on the football field, could crash a twelve-stone flyer off his feet. For this dear Club three times I won the Cup, and grieve in reason I was just too weak this year to play again. And now, before I go, I give you all the Cup, the Silver Tassie, to have and to hold for ever, evermore. (*From his chair he takes the Cup with the two sides hammered close together, and holds it out to them.*) Mangled and bruised as I am bruised and mangled. Hammered free from all its comely shape. Look, there is Jessie writ, and here is Harry, the one

name safely separated from the other. (*He flings it on the floor.*) Treat it kindly. With care it may be opened out, for Barney there to drink to Jess, and Jess to drink to Barney.

TEDDY. Come, Harry, home to where the air is soft. No longer can you stand upon a hill-top; these empty eyes of mine can never see from one. Our best is all behind us—what's in front we'll face like men, dear comrade of the blood-fight and the battle-front!

HARRY. What's in front we'll face like men!

(*HARRY goes out by the window, SYLVESTER pushing the chair, TEDDY'S hand on HARRY'S shoulder, MRS. HEEGAN slowly following. Those left in the room watch them going out through the garden, turning to the right till they are all out of sight.*)

(*As he goes out of window*) The Lord hath given and man hath taken away!

TEDDY (*heard from the garden*). Blessed be the name of the Lord!

(*The band in the hall begin to play the tango "Spain". Those in hall begin to dance.*)

MAXWELL. Come on, all, we've wasted too much time already.

SUSIE (*to JESSIE, who is sitting quietly in a chair*). Come on, Jessie—get your partner; (*roguishly*) you can have a quiet time with Barney later on.

JESSIE. Poor Harry!

SUSIE. Oh nonsense! If you'd passed as many through your hands as I, you'd hardly notice one. (*SUSIE pulls JESSIE from the chair.*) Come along, Barney, take her in.

(*BARNEY comes over, puts his arm round JESSIE and they dance into the hall. SUSIE and SURGEON MAXWELL dance together, and when the chorus of the tango comes they sing as they dance into the hall.*)

MAXWELL:

Let him sigh with the shadows of men,  
For men shall just reap as they sow.  
A kiss may breed sorrow, and then  
Sorrow may spring from a blow.

SUSIE:

Time to look sad when we know,  
So let us be merry again.  
He is gone, we remain, and so  
Let him wrap himself up in his woe—  
For he is a life on the ebb,  
We a full life on the flow.

(*All in the hall dance away with*

## THE SILVER TASSIE

ACT IV

*streamers and balloons flying. SIMON and MRS. FORAN sit down and watch the fun through the entrance. MRS. FORAN lights a cigarette and smokes. A pause as they look on.)*

MRS. FORAN. It's a terrible pity Harry was too weak to stay an' sing his song, for there's nothing I love more than the ukelele's tinkle, tinkle in the night-time.

# SONGS AND CHANTS IN THE PLAY

## 1st CHANT.



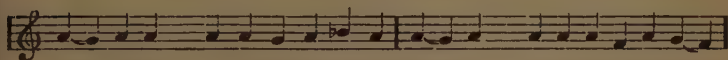
1. I sees the mis-sus paryd-ing a-long Wal-ham Green, Through the jewels



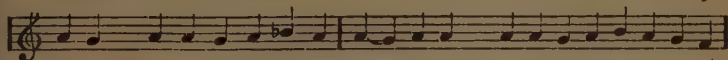
an' silks on the cos-ters' carts, Em-mie a-pull-ing her skirt



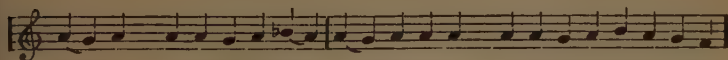
an' mut-ter-ing, "A bal-loon, a bal-loon, I wants a bal-loon",



2. The mis-sus . . . an' your fa-ther fight-ing: You'll wait . . . that's wot I wants to know!

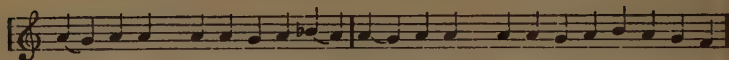


3. Tabs 'll . . . for-ty-eight bat-ta-lion, The Yel-low . . . leg up on the path to glo-ry;

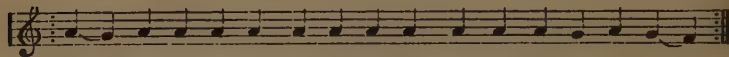


4. Now with . . . Ar-my of the Marne, An' all the time . . . two men looking after business.

## THE SILVER TASSIE



5. The padre ... muv-ver 'as you 'ere." An' last time ... sep-er-y-tion mon-ey's reg'-lar.

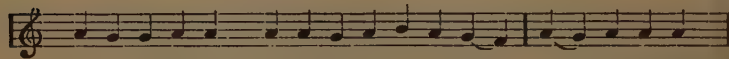


6. But wy - 'i we 'ere, wy - 'r we 'ere—that's wot I wants to know?

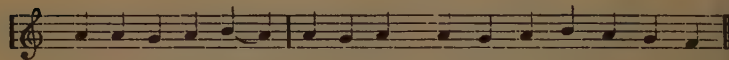
### 2nd CHANT.



A Brass-hat . . . world an' the Es - tam - i - nay's daugh-ter,

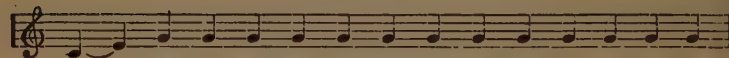


In a py-jam-a'd . . . an Es-tam-i-na - y cock, An' I was pinch'd...

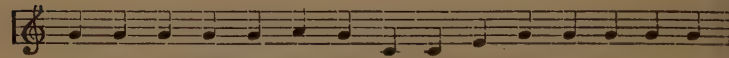


with a pint of peas. And the hens ... a place of des - o - la - tion!

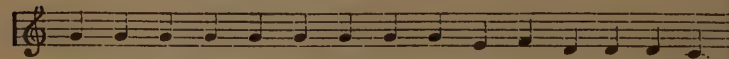
### 3rd CHANT.



1. God's bless - in' on the... thought-less blight-ers, Mik - in' mis - er - ies



of war so bright and 'ome-like. Pic - tures'll bloom in the il - lus-



try - ted pi - pers Of the minds of the Tom-mies a-go-ing up - stairs.

# THE SILVER TASSIE



2. The perk-y . . . queers me, Furi-ous-ly feel-ing . . . front-line fight-ing.

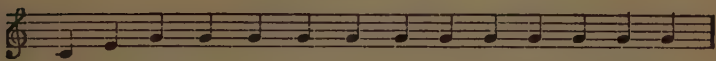


3. In his full-blown, . . . mur-mur, "Here's a stand-fast . . . whis-per "yes-sir".

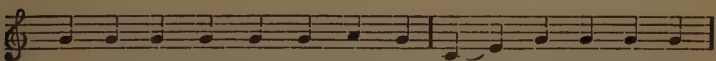


4. Like a bride, . . . ser-mon, From the cush-y . . . Tom-mie's back-side.

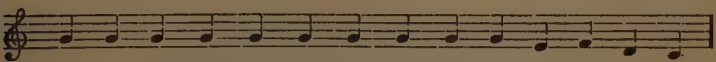
## 4th CHANT.



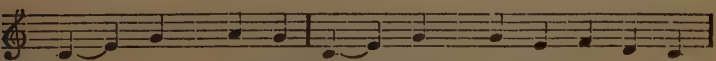
1. Jazz-ing back to his ho-tel he now goes gai-ly, Shel-ter'd



and safe where the clock ticks tame-ly. His back-side warm-ing



a cu-shion, down-fill'd, Green clad, well splash'd with gold birds red-beak'd.



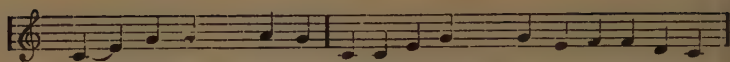
2. Hedg'd in . . . gleam-ing, To drink . . . a world's re-new-ing.



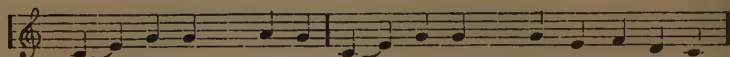
3. Still stand-ing . . . vas-es, Pa-tient of the life . . . and yel-low blos-soms.



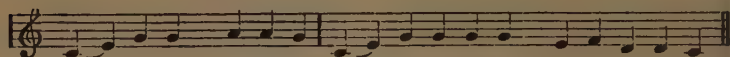
## THE SILVER TASSIE



4. His last dim . . . ju - dy; Cuddling with proud, . . . the mud of the tren-ches.

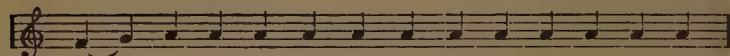


5. His tun - ic . . . pass-ing, Through col-our . . . shop snug in Bond Street.

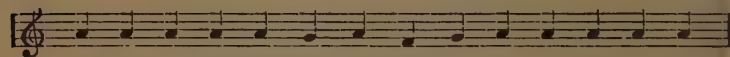


6. Shame and scorn . . . com-pan-y; Then the decor-a-tions . . . of self - sac - ri - fice.

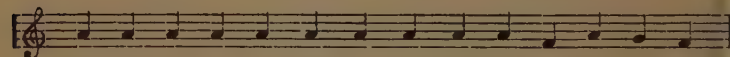
### 5th CHANT.



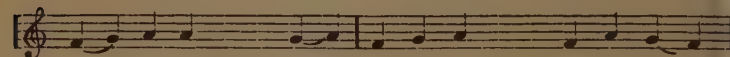
1. To - night as the hate - ful rine is fall - ing, Drench-ing us



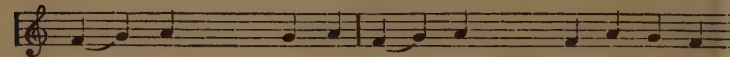
all with a sicken-ing damp-ness, We'll p'r - ide to dripe our gas-



masks meek - ly, Ac - cord - ing to Staff - Wall - ah's new-born or - ders.

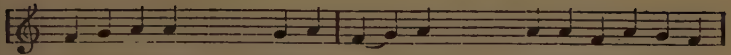


2. A warn-ing . . . give, To the front . . . do, to God.

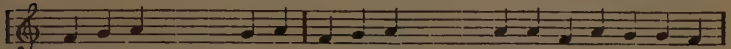


3. Where hot . . . shel - ter, Quick - tim'd . . . death a - round us.

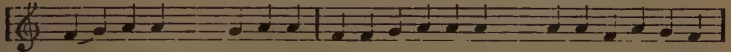
## THE SILVER TASSIE



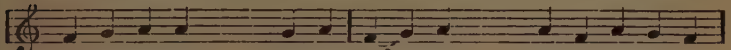
4. God, un-chang-ing, . . . night sky To mask . . . His self-slay-ing chil-dren.



5. Stems of light . . . star-shells, Glow-er-ing . . . gen-tle star of Beth-le-hem.



6. Steel 'el-met, . . . caw-trid-ges, Bun-dle of ban-dag-es, . . . body, soul and spir-it.



7. Stumbling, swiftly . . . grous-ing, Through mud . . . seek slow the front line.



8. Squeals of hid-den . . . wounded—Christ who bore . . . tied to a field gun.

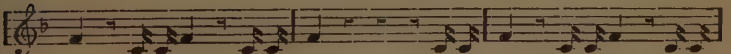
## THE ENEMY HAS BROKEN THROUGH.



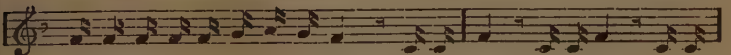
The en-em-y has brok-en through, brok-en through, brok-en through! Ev-ery



man born of wo-man to the guns, to the guns. To the



guns, to the guns, to the guns! Those at prayer, all in bed and the



swillers drinking deeply in the pubs. To the guns, to the guns. All the

## THE SILVER TASSIE

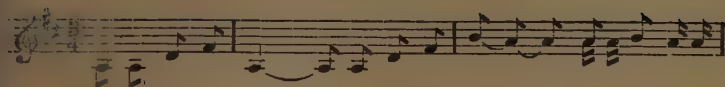
bats-men, ev - ery cook, ev - ery bitch's son that hides A whiff of  
 cour - age in his veins, Shelter'd vig - our in his bod - y, That can  
 run, or can walk, ev - en crawl— - - Dig him  
 out, dig him out, shove him on— - - To the guns!

## SONG TO THE GUN.

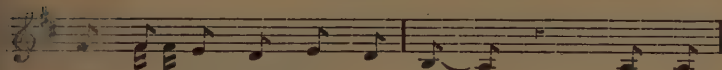
Hail, cool-hardened tower of steel em-boss'd With the fever'd, fig-ment  
 thoughts of man; Guard - ian of our love and hate and fear,  
 Speak for us to the in - ner ear of God!  
 We be - lieve in God and we be - lieve in thee,

# THE SILVER TASSIE

## GOD, AND I SMOK'D.



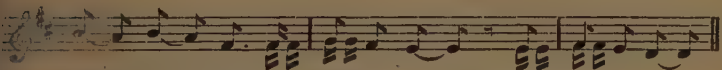
God, and I smok'd and walk'd and watch'd - - The dance of a  
 God, and I smok'd and lift - ed car - goes From the lad - en  
 To hang here ev - en a lit - tle lon - ger, Loung - ing  
 If you creep to rest in a clos'd-up cof - fin, A tail of  
 Each spar - row, hop - ping, ir - re - sponsible, Is in - den - tur'd



gol - den Brim - stone but - ter - fly, - - To the  
 shoul - ders of Lon - don's riv - er way; - - The  
 through fear - swell'd, anx - ious moments; The  
 com - rades see - ing you safe home; - - Or a  
 in God's migh - ty mem - o - ry; . - And we,



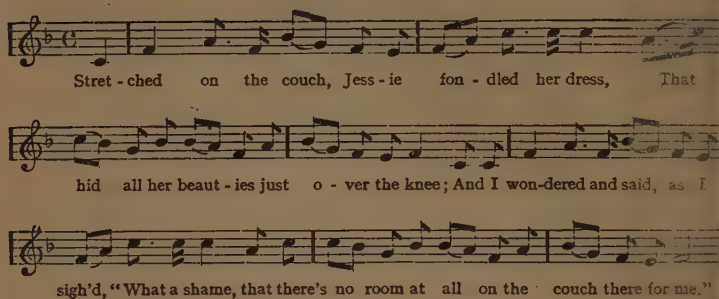
rust - ling pipe of a green - finch rest - ing In a  
 holi - day'd, roar - ing out courage and move - ment To the  
 him - der - parts of The god of bat - tles Shading our  
 ker - nel lost in a shell ex - plod - ing - It's all,  
 more than they all, shall not be lost In the for -



dreary, brambled lane in Cumber - land. In Cumber - land.  
 mas - cled ma - chines of Tottenham Hotspur. Of Tottenham Hotspur.  
 war - tir'd eyes from his flam - ing face. From his flaming face.  
 sure, on - ly in a life - time. A life - time.  
 get - ful - ness of the Lord of Hosts. Of the Lord of Hosts.

# THE SILVER TASSIE

## SURGEON'S SONG.



## STRETCHER-BEARERS' SONG.

